

A MONSTER CALLS

Written by

Patrick Ness

Based on the novel "A Monster Calls" by Patrick Ness,
Inspired by an idea from Siobhan Dowd

25 September 2014

Michelle Kass Associates
85 Charing Cross Road
London WC2H 0AA
020 7439 1624

Sounds fade up

Nightmare sounds, wind, roaring screaming.

Sounds increase, climax, then stop suddenly as:

cut to:

1 InT. conoR'S BEDROOM - night - CONTINUOUS

1

Conor (12, small, on the border of puberty) sits up in bed, frightened, sweaty, panting.

He looks at the clock. 11.58.

It's a messy but homey bedroom. Posters at the borders of manhood on the wall: rugby teams but also cartoons. Old stuffed toys in corners; framed PHOTOS of Conor and his MUM; of Conor and friend LILY in a school play; a laptop; handheld games; scattered DRAWINGS he's made. Conor lays back down to sleep but:

A heavy COUGHING from offscreen. Conor listens, concerned. The coughing doesn't come again. He sits up.

2 InT. conor's hallway/ MUM'S BEDROOM - night - CONTINUOUS 2

Conor pads quietly down the hallway until he gets to his Mum's bedroom door. It's open slightly. He looks in.

In the moonlight, Mum is asleep, alone in her bed. Her head is obscured by pillows.

 CONOR

Mum, are you asleep?

 Mum

Yes.

 CONOR

Are you sure?

 Mum

 (opens one eye to him)

Yes, I'm sure.

2A InT. mum's bedroom - night - CONTINUOUS

2A

Conor quietly slips into the bed.

 Mum
 What are you doing?

 CONOR
 Shush. You're asleep.

 Mum
 Conor...

 CONOR
 Just five minutes, I promise...

Mum puts his arm around Conor who instantly falls asleep.

CuT TO:

4NEW Int. mum's bedroom - the next morning

4NEW

Conor is VERY deep asleep, having obviously stayed there all night. His mum is asleep, too, gently snoring.

In the dawn light we now see a LINE OF MEDICINE BOTTLES on Mum's DRESSER. A wig on its stand on the dressing table.

Conor wakes, sits up. Mum doesn't wake. He pulls the covers over her. He doesn't glance at the medicine bottles. They're obviously part of his daily life.

Very slowly making sure he is not making any noise, Conor gets up and heads out into the day by himself.

8

INT. CONOR'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

8

Conor begins what is obviously a familiar routine.

He puts on his school uniform, trying for the untucked rebellious look that he's still just slightly too young for. (he tries to make his hair look cool in the mirror and puts it up but he looks funny and puts it down again, etc).

He opens a drawer. No clean socks left.

8A EXT. CONOR'S BACKGARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

8A

Conor gets out to the backgarden to where the clothes are hanging to look for a clean pair of socks but all the clothes are wet. He takes a wet pair of socks and goes back into the house.

9 INT. CONOR'S Kitchen - Moments Later

9

Conor stuffs the WASHING MACHINE with LAUNDRY, over-filling it, but shutting it all in the door.

10

INT. CONOR'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

10

Conor pulls the duvet over his bed so it's made, if quite messy. (Clumsily hiding the wrinkles of the duvet under the cushions)

11 Int. conor's house upstairs hallway - moments Later 11

Conor looks at his Mum's bedroom (the door is closed) and then over the top of the stairs. Down in the kitchen, we can hear the faint sounds of a WOMAN on her phone. This is GRANDMA (mid-50s, crisp, professional, VERY ungrandmotherly).

Conor only sees the top of her head as she exits, still in her coat, still on her phone, scolding someone sternly. We don't see her face in these scenes. She also is clearly making an attempt to keep her voice down.

GRANDMA
 (into phone)
 Because I've got three showings
 today, that's why. I'm not
 responsible for your sick
 Weimaraner-

He steps back so she won't see him. We only catch a glimpse of her as she leaves.

He waits a beat, then starts down the stairs, but she re-enters, carrying bags of groceries, still on the phone. Conor freezes. Grandma stops in the hall, angry at something that's been said.

GrandMA (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 How dare you throw that in my face?
 Do you have any idea what-?
 (beat, listens, gathers
 self, still angry,
 whispers fiercely)
 Now, you listen to me, Marcus, I
 know full well you've covered for
 me-

Storms into kitchen. We hear her still talking. Conor waits, nervous. She exits the kitchen again, still whispering.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Fine. Fine. I'll call her myself.
 (hangs up)
 Lazy bastard.

She exits again. Conor waits a beat, then goes downstairs.

11A InT. conor's downstairs hallway - seconds LATER 11A

Conor, deeply curious, heads towards the kitchen. Then he
HEARS THE FRONT DOOR again and steps quickly into-

...where he hides behind the door. His Grandma, on the phone again, enters, looking for a pen and paper.

GRANDMA

(into phone)

If you do my afternoons today, I can take your open house on Saturday.

(rolls eyes)

Of course, I'll give you your commission...

She looks around the warmly messy sitting room, lifting things, and looking for and finding a bit of paper. She keeps looking.

GrANDMA (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Pen, pen, pen... This house-

(into phone)

Yes, I'm here right now.

(almost snapping)

She's fine.

Conor watches, waiting to be discovered, but his grandma never even turns around. She finds a pen.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

(into phone, coldly,
finding it hard to say
thanks)

Yes. Thank you. I... appreciate it.

Hangs up as the caller is mid-sentence. Leaves. By sound, Conor follows her movements into the kitchen, out again and out of the house. He waits until her car starts before he feels safe to move again.

13

INT. conor's kitChEN - momentS LATER

13

On the counter, there are now BAGS OF GROCERIES and a closed CARDBOARD BOX with a POST-IT NOTE on it. Conor reads it, doesn't react.

Opens the groceries. They're FULL OF MEDICINAL-LOOKING HEALTH FOOD. Conor makes a face.

CuT TO:

Conor prepares himself breakfast. The toast is burnt. Conor scratches the burnt stuff off with a knife. The black dust falls on the white plate. He makes a couple of strokes on the dust with his finger and creates a drawing.

14

INT. CONOR'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

14

Conor throws away his leftovers (there's a lot he didn't eat), and washes the breakfast dishes on the sink. He stays there for a moment absentminded staring out the window.

14A EXT. CHURCHYARD HILLTOP/ CONOR'S HOUSE- Moments LATER 14A

CONOR'S POV - A yew tree stands in the churchyard at the top of the hill in front of the house.

15 Int. conOR'S KITCHEN - mornING - MomentS LATER

15

He finishes packing his school bag with books and papers. Looks at the clock again. There is something he needs to check.

He opens a drawer of the kitchen table and slams it shut making a loud dry noise. He waits there.

MUM (o.S.)

(faint)

Con? Is everything alright?

Finally.

Conor

Yes Mum! It slipped from my hands!
I gotta go or iI'll be late!

MUM

Ok! Rush!

15B Int. conoR'S KITCHEN - mornING - MomentS LATeR

15B

CONOR'S MUM leans against the kitchen counter with a cup of tea, scarf tied around her head. She's clearly undergoing CHEMO-THERAPY: thin, pale, bald. Exhausted, but facing it well. Conor SWEEPS up the glass.

Mum
You've had breakfast?

ConoR
Yes, mum.

She gives him a look. She may be ill, but she's still Mum.

Conor (CONT'D)
(exasperated)
Toast, cereal and juice.
(mum sees no sign)
I washed the dishes.

Mum
(quietly, looking at the
clean kitchen)
There's washing going too.

CONOR
Yes Mum.

Mum reaches for the BROOM..

MuM
(sighs)
I'm sorry I wasn't up.

ConoR
It's okay.

Mum
You know, it's just this new round
of-

Conor
It's okay.

Mum is surprised at strength of his interruption, but she lets it pass. She turns to the groceries and the box.

MuM
(caught)
Your grandma's coming to stay with
us tomorrow for a few days.

CONOR
Aw, mum. We don't need her here-

MUM

You know how I get at this point in the treatments-

CONOR

We've been okay every time before-

Mum

You shouldn't have to make yourself breakfast every morning-

CONOR

I'm fine-

MUM

CONOR.

Phrases Conor complaining

Beat, as it's Conor's turn to be shocked at the interruption. Mum, exhausted, smiles again.

Mum (CONT'D)

Only a few days, I promise. That's all I can take, too. Like living with your boss.

(laughs)

She's going to bring me a box full of wigs she got somewhere, if you can believe it. Be lucky if I don't end up looking like a zombie Lady Gaga.

Conor is relaxing, the atmosphere improving. Mum regards him for a moment, then ruffles his hair.

MUM (CONT'D)

(fake serious)

Now, tell me you haven't shrunk my favourite wool jumpers?

Conor laughs shyly.

Mum (CONT'D)

Go on, go.

(as he crosses to his bag)

Stop dragging your feet!

He picks them up comically, like a clown. As Conor puts his rucksack on, Mum leans against the counter, looking out the window.

16-16A EXT. CONOR'S HOUSE DRIVEWAY/ STREETS - later

16-16A

Conor walks to school, rucksack on his back. It's a bit of a journey, and he pulls his coat tight against the cold.

16B Ext. SHOP ROAD - moRNING

16B

He's deep in thought, but he's distracted by one SHOP WINDOW (the ART SHOP where his paper bag was from). Inside the window are a set of art pencils that he obviously craves.

He's about to walk on but he sees someone down the street. He steps into the doorway to hide while he watches:

A girl, LILY, 12, thick glasses, the friend from the photo in his bedroom. She's harmless, goofy, charming, but Conor holds back so she won't see him.

17 Ext. SCHOOL OUTSIDE - moments LATER

17

Establish. Conor & Lily are in the first year of secondary,
so they're the tiniest students among giants.

18

EXT. ALLEY/ SPORTS FIELD - later

18

C/U on Conor falling, as if pushed, hitting the concrete path. Still down, he puts his hand to his lip. It comes away bloody.

Behind him, we see HARRY, 13, blond wonder boy, calmly vicious bully, flanked by ANTON and SULLY, both 13. Harry is straightening his leg, clearly having tripped Conor.

Harry
Careful there, O'Malley. You might
fall.

The minions laugh. Conor is resigned. This isn't new. He reaches for his bag and starts to get up, but a perfectly timed trip from Harry sends him falling again.

HARRY (CONT'D)
Always off in your own little
dreamworld. What's there that's so
interesting, O'Malley?

The minions keep laughing. Conor starts to rise again. There's blood on his lip.

sully
(joyous)
He's bleeding!

anton
He'll have to get his slaphead
mother to kiss it for him!

Silence, as the group absorbs this crossing of the line. Conor's face hardens, but before he can respond, Lily bounces back into the scene.

Lily
You leave him alone! [Cowards!
There's three of you and one of
him! I'm not scared of you! You're
pathetic!]

Conor winces, and Harry's minions are already laughing. Not Harry, though, who never stops looking at Conor.

SULLY
Your puppy's here to save you,
O'Malley!

Outraged, Lily - who is, in fact, a little puppy-ish - pushes Sully hard. Surprised, he falls backwards over a shrubbery.

LILY
I'm just making it a fair fight!

MISS KWAN (O.S.)
LILY EVANS!

Everyone freezes as Head of Year MISS KWAN (late 30s, British-Chinese descent, stern but fair) storms over.

LILY
They started it, Miss!

MISS KWAN
I don't want to hear it.
(to Sully, now rising)
Are you hurt, Sullivan?

Sully, seeing an opening, fakes injury. Badly.

Sully
I might need to go home, Miss.

MISS KWAN
Don't milk it.
(to Lily)
My office, Lily.

LILY
But, Miss, they were-

MISS KWAN
Now.

LILY
They were making fun of Conor's
mother!

Everyone freezes. A dangerous silence.

MISS KWAN
Is this true, Conor?

Conor looks from Anton to Sully, and on to Lily, her face burning with injustice, but then to Harry, who is as calm and firmly fixed on Conor as ever.

Conor
(eyes on Harry)
No, Miss. I just fell. They were
helping me up.

Lily looks like she's been slapped.

MISS KWAN
Get to your forms.
(to Lily)
Not you.

Miss Kwan drags an aghast Lily away. Conor watches them go. When he turns back, Harry is holding out Conor's bag for him.

Harry
Well done, O'Malley.

Beat. Conor takes the bag and makes his way inside.

19

Int. Physical Social and Education class - LATER

19

A Powerpoint display at the front of the class reads: "THE MIRACLE OF BIRTH". MR CLARK, 40s, wry, kind, perhaps a bit soft, steps up next to it.

Mr Clark
Brace yourselves.

Conor sits at the back, an empty desk next to him. He looks very drowsy.

MR Clark (CONT'D)
We've been studying this all week.
You've seen the diagrams, heard the descriptions. You think you're ready to watch the real thing.

He gives a you-have-no-idea-what-you're-in-for chuckle and clicks to start a hilariously graphic CHILDBIRTH DOCUMENTARY on the Powerpoint.

The sounds from the documentary ("The cervix fully dilates to 10 centimeters and the baby's head crowns when the widest part of it reaches the vaginal opening", complete with sounds of a mother in labour) fade as we focus on Conor, looking exhausted, falling asleep propping up his face with his hand.

He's sitting under the A/C vent and the sound of it starts to merge with a WIND sound, that eventually rises to the SOUNDTRACK of the NIGHTMARE we heard over the TITLES. We close on Conor, the soundtrack rising to a FAINT SCREAMING ("Conor!").

Mr Clark (CONT'D)
Conor?

Conor jumps as Mr Clark is right next to him. He waits to see if he's in trouble. But Mr Clark looks overly sympathetic.

MR Clark (CONT'D)
You all right there? You look tired.
(beat, nothing from Conor)
You know, if you ever wanted to talk-

He's interrupted by a labour-scream from the video and an accompanying SHOUT OF HORROR from the class who can't believe what they're seeing ("As soon as the baby's head comes out, the doctor will suction amniotic fluid, blood, and mucus from they baby's nose and mouth"). Mr Clark looks up with an amused smile, gives Conor a last look, and keeps patrolling the classroom.

Conor sees Harry a few seats over. Harry's watched the exchange and looks as if he's sussing Conor out, somehow.

As the sounds of childbirth and the accompanying trauma of the class continue ("The umbilical cord will eventually fall off due to a combination of putrefaction and mummification"), Lily enters from the front, eyes swollen from crying. She sits next to Conor in the empty desk. He doesn't acknowledge her, despite her furious gaze.

Wounded, she looks up at the video and is comically horrified by what she sees.

Mr Clark reaches the front of the classroom as the sounds of childbirth reach their exhausted conclusion ("And mother's happy ordeal is finally over..."). Mr Clark clicks off the Powerpoint and turns to the class.

Mr Clark (CONT'D)
Any questions?

Apart from Conor, Lily and Harry, every single traumatised hand in the classroom shoots into the air.

20

EXT. BIN street - that afternoon

20

Conor walks home by himself, lost in thought.

LILY (o.S.)
Hey! Wait! Conor, wait!

She catches up to him. He ignores her.

Lily (CONT'D)
Why did you do that today? Why
didn't you tell Miss Kwan what
really happened?

Conor
Why did you butt in when it was
none of your business?

LILY
I was trying to help you.

CONOR
I don't need your help.

LILY
(visibly hurt)
My mum keeps asking why you don't
come over anymore.

Conor says nothing.

Lily (CONT'D)
(now genuinely distressed)
What the heck is wrong with you?
I've got detention all week now.

CONOR
That's not my problem.

LILY
But it's your fault.

Conor turns on her in fury. She steps back, frightened.

ConoR
It's your fault. It's all your
fault.

He takes off walking again, leaving her behind.

Lily
(calling after him)
We used to be friends!

Conor carries on down the street, fast at first then slowing
as he nears his house. He looks back to see if Lily is still
there, half-hoping she will be. She isn't.

21 InT. conor's sitting room - moments LATER

21

Conor enters, not too happy. Mum is waiting there, cardboard box open. Conor looks wary at an OLD-FASHIONED SUPER 8 FILM PROJECTOR. Canisters of FILM sit next to it. Mum is nervous, excited.

ConOR

What is it?

22

INT. conor's sitting room - moments later

22

Conor and Mum set up the projector. Neither of them really know how to do it, so they figure it out together, threading the film, getting it wrong, eventually getting it right.

MUM

Your granddad's old film projector.

CONOR

You mean... like a video player?

MUM

(laughs)

No, this is a relic, a proper dinosaur.

CONOR

(long beat)

What are we supposed to do with it?

Mum

I wish you could have met him. Even your grandma softened up around him. By the way, she is coming to stay with us tomorrow for a few days.

CONOR

Aw, mum. We don't need her here-

MUM

You know how I get at this point in the treatments-

CONOR

We've been okay every time before-

Mum

You shouldn't have to make yourself breakfast every morning-

CONOR

I'm fine-

MUM

CONOR.

Conor's a bit shocked at the strength of the interruption. Mum is, too. Exhausted, she smiles again.

Mum (CONT'D)

Only a few days, I promise. That's all I can take, too. Like living with your boss.

She laughs. Conor tries to, too.

MUM (CONT'D)

Can we just enjoy the movie? I got it for us.

ConOR

(picking up film canister)
What are we watching?

MUM

King Kong. Oldie but a goodie.

ConOR

Are we really going to watch something though? You always fall asleep.

MUM

I won't fall asleep. I promise.
(stepping back)
Right. I think we got it.

Black & White TITLES come up for KING KONG.

CONOR

(moans)
You didn't say it was black and white.

MUM

(mischievous)
Be happy it's not a silent movie.

CONOR

Mum.

MUM

Shush.

Conor nestles in to watch, unhappy.

23 InT. conor's sitting room - later

23

It's dark outside now. Conor, despite himself, is still watching. We can see leftovers of the pizza they ordered. He looks over. His mum is asleep against the arm of the settee.

He reaches over and covers her with a blanket and keeps watching it.

But it's the sequence where KONG is on the Empire State Building. BI-PLANES ATTACK and KONG falls-

Conor is surprisingly shocked by this, obviously triggering some memory. He watches as Kong falls and falls and falls...

Then with a burst of WHITE, the reel finishes, leaving Conor watching a blank white space. We zoom in on the white and dissolve to:

24 Int. conor's BEDROOM/HALLWAY - that night

24

A white sketchpad sheet. A hand comes in to draw. Conor at his desk. It's RAINING heavily outside now, and his window is covered with condensation. His clock reads 11.34.

He draws KONG on the skyscraper. It's good. He FLIPS THE PAPER OVER and draws BI-PLANES on the back. He holds it up to the desk lamp. He flicks the light on and off, making the planes appear and disappear, like they're firing shots (Sound Effect: "Ratatatatata" leading us to sound of nightmare).

Then he draws Kong falling. He gets lost in it, and the sound of the NIGHTMARE rises again. This time, we even see flashes of it:

24A NIGHTMARE

24A

--FLASH OF TWO PAIRS OF HANDS locked in a ferocious grip,
as if one is trying to keep the other from falling.

Conor keeps drawing, almost furiously.

24B NIGHTMARE

24B

--FLASH OF VIOLENT MOTION, dark and burning.

Conor keeps drawing, as the soundtrack intensifies. He doesn't notice a breeze tousling his hair or the pencils rolling across the desk again.

24C NIGHTMARE

24C

--FLASH OF A DISTANT FIGURE ON A CLIFF'S EDGE, calling out, "CONOR!!"

Soundtrack ceases as he sits back and blinks at the sketchpad. He's drawn a GAPING HOLE OF BLACKNESS that looks as if it might swallow the whole world. A face - possibly HIMSELF - stands at the edge of it, looking back up to us.

He suddenly hears hurried footsteps in the hall. They rush past his room to the toilet. We hear his mum being brutally sick. Conor waits. She vomits again.

ConOR
(calling to her)
Do you need any help?

Mum (o.S.)
(beat, forced cheer)
No, sweetheart!

Beat, then water running. Footsteps. He covers the nightmare with the Kong drawing and quickly moves back to his bed. She opens his door.

CONOR
You okay?

Mum
I'm kind of used to it by now.
Sorry I dozed off during the film.
You should be asleep, too.

ConoR
I was. I am.

She sees his desklamp still on. She goes over and picks up the sketchpad, including the nightmare drawing. Conor is alarmed. Mum sits down on the bed next to him and looks through his Kong sketches.

MUM
This is good, Conor. Such a sad ending.

Conor
(troubled)
Why did they kill King Kong?

MUM
People don't like what they don't understand. They get scared.

Conor
Her boyfriend was a jerk.

MUM

Yeah, he's pretty bad.

Conor

King Kong should have squashed him.

Broken him into a million pieces.

(makes squashing motion)

Boom!

She smiles and turns to the nightmare finally, a little scared by the hole and the face he's drawn, but she looks closer. It has very realistic eyes. She's very surprised and impressed.

MUM

What is this? Is that you?

Conor

No, Mum.

MUM

Looks like you.

Conor shrugs.

MUM (CONT'D)

It's very good. Really, REALLY good. The strokes of the pen... And I love the reflection in the eyes... Life is in the eyes, you know.

(gentle beat)

What's it of? What's this scene?

Conor

(shrugs)

Nothing. Just... I made it up.

MUM

Well, doesn't matter where it comes from if it's true. That's what artists do. They say the truth.

Conor smiles. Suddenly the mother realizes what time it is.

MUM (CONT'D)

Gosh, it's late, isn't it? Time for us both to be asleep.

She bops him playfully on the head with the sketchpad.

3 INT. CONOR'S BEDROOM - night - CONTINUOUS

3

Conor is back on his bed in the dark bedroom. He can't get back to sleep. He sits up and looks at his small DRAWING DESK in the corner.

3A EXT. churchyard hilltop - night - continuous

3A

A YEW TREE, huge, ancient, ominous looms on the hill overlooking Conor's house. Its needle-like leaves are sharp in the moonlight, red berries clustered throughout its branches. It sits in a small churchyard on a hilltop, a graveyard stretching down the hill in front of it.

Down below, Conor's bedroom desk light comes on.

3B InT. conOR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

3B

Conor takes out drawing pencils and sharpens them. He takes out an inexpensive SKETCHPAD out of a PAPER BAG from an art store. Tired but awake, he flips through the earlier sketches - fantastical things, superheroes, etc, they're very good - and finds a blank page.

He taps the pencil to his teeth, wondering what to draw. His clock ticks over to 12.07, and as if on cue:

monster (O.S.)
(whispering)
Conor.

A monstrous voice, deep, old as the earth itself. Conor looks immediately to the door. Did he actually hear that?

ConoR
Mum?

But it's not coming from the door. He looks out his closed window. It dramatically frames the hilltop with the yew tree. Conor decides to draw it, making a frame on his page for the window. A pencil starts to roll across the desk.

Conor sees it, looks back up to the window: the YEW TREE IS NO LONGER THERE.

Conor is astonished, confused. Conor stands and looks out the window. It's shut but a breeze tousles his hair.

3C The yew tree is now standing farther down the hill. 3C

Conor stares in disbelief. As he watches, the tree begins to change. It shifts and splits, twisting slowly, incredibly, into the shape of a TOWERING MAN:

--two muscular arms made from branches twining together.

--a second leg placed down beside the trunk.

--the uppermost branches gathering into a great and terrible face with huge, monstrous eyes.

Conor watches, amazed, but not overly afraid...

THE MONSTER, huge and impressive, strides across the rail line, over Conor's back fence and stands up in front of him.

 MonSTER
 Conor O'Malley.

The voice echoes and booms. The Monster suddenly FALLS against the house, its hands on either side of Conor's window, lowering its head to peer inside.

3D The Monster pushes against the house. It creaks under the 3D
Monster's weight.

MONSTER (CONT'D)
I have come to get you, Conor
O'Malley.

Conor
(beat)
So come and get me then.

Monster
What did you say?

Conor crosses his arms.

CONOR
I said, come and get me then.

The monster roars terrifyingly. Conor hides at one side of
his desk and puts his hands over his ears at the sheer volume
of the Monster's voice.

MONSTER
(taunting)
Why don't you run, Conor O'Malley?
Why don't you run for your mother?

Conor looks surprisingly defiant at this. He stands and
closes his bedroom door, as if to protect his mum.

CONOR
(surprisingly defiant)
You leave her alone! I'm not afraid
of you!

A beat, as the monster, impossibly, looks surprised-
And disappears.

3E Then it ROARS and PUNCHES an enormous fist through Conor's 3E window, taking out a large section of the wall.

Conor at last tries to run, but the monster is too fast, grabbing him up and pulling him out of his bedroom...

3F I/E CONOR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

3F

...lifting him high into the night. The Monster roars again,
still terrifying.

3G In the Monster's grasp, Conor can barely breathe, but he 3G
looks surprisingly defiant. The Monster stops, perplexed.

The Monster gets an angry look.

MONSTER

You will be. Before the end. I will
visit you again on further nights
Conor O'Malley. And I will shake
your walls until you wake. And then
I will tell you three stories. And
when I have finished my stories,
you will tell me a fourth and it
will be the truth. Your truth.

CONOR

(scared now)

What are you talking about?

MONSTER

This truth that you hide.

(glowers)

The truth you draw, Conor O'Malley.
The truth you dream.

CONOR

No. No way-

MONSTER

For this is why you called me.

CONOR

Called you? I didn't call you-

MONSTER

You will tell me the fourth tale.
You will tell me the truth.

CONOR

And if I don't?

Its mouth ROARS impossibly wide, and hundreds of branches
emerge from it like tentacles trying to reach Conor's face.

Cut TO:

4 Omitted

4

4A Omitted

4A

4B Int. Conor'S BEDROOM - dawn

4B

As credits end, zoom out from the drawing and Conor rips it up. He empties the bag of sketchpad/supplies and starts filling it with berries.

5 INT. CONOR'S KITCHEN - MORNING - later

5

CONOR pokes his head around the door into his kitchen.

ConOR

Mum?

It's empty. Good. He drags the PAPER BAG FROM THE ART STORE to the BIN and shoves it deep inside. It opens a little; we see that it's full of YEW TREE BERRIES. Conor covers it with other rubbish.

5A Omitted

5A

6 Omitted

6

7 EXT. conOR'S HOUSE DRIVEWAY - Moments LATER

7

Conor drags the wheelie bin to the curb to leave it for the dustmen, wipes his hands, looks back to the house.

ConOR

Right.

25 Omitted

25

26 Omitted

26

27 Omitted

27

27 NEW INT. CONOR'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

27 NEW

Conor enters his room and throws his rucksack to the floor.
He removes his clothes and checks out the bruises on his
chest and stomach.

He changes his clothes and looks out the window.

28 EXT. conor's back GARDEN - the next morning

28

The rain has stopped. It's a cold, clear day. Conor warily walks across his back garden to an OLD IRON GATE in the back fence.

28B EXT. HILL GATES - MORNING

28B

28A EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - MORNING

28A

This LEADS ON TO THE RAILWAY LINE,

but a LOCK on the GATE has long since broken. The gate is slouched open.

Conor approaches, all the time watching the tree on the hilltop. He gets to the gate, stepping slightly through, hand on the open half.

A WIND rustles the top of the yew tree. It also RUSTLES CONOR'S HAIR. Do we hear a whisper? Is a voice saying, "Conor..."

Conor pulls the gate shut firmly, still watching the tree. The wind dies.

Mum (o.s.)

Conor?

He turns at the call from his mum.

Conor enters through the kitchen and sees his GRANDMA (mid-50s, crisp, professional, VERY ungrandmotherly) standing with her back turned to him in the sitting room. Mum, red scarf tied around her head, sits on the couch looking into a box. She glances up and sees Conor, causing GRANDMA to turn.

Grandma
(crisp, not entirely
friendly)
Ah, there's the little man.

Mum
(still looking in box)
Jesus, Ma, let him have a childhood
first.
(pulls out a terrible wig)
Where did you say you got these?

GrandMA
Clearance of a very nice old
people's home. They're turning it
into flats and I'll be the agent.

Mum gives Conor a look of comical horror Grandma can't see. Conor smiles. Grandma looks to see if she's being made fun of, but Mum's face immediately goes serious again.

GrandMA (CONT'D)
They're clean.

MUM
Thanks, Ma.

Conor shares one last conspiratorial look with his Mum.

GRANDMA
They'll be warmer than those
scarves. It's not exactly summer
anymore. In case you haven't
noticed.

Mum
(quietly defiant)
I like my scarves.

GrandMA
(to Conor)
Your mother needs some tea. Green,
no sugar. I take mine black.

Conor looks at his Mum at this command. She rolls her eyes and nods. As he leaves, Grandma turns back to Mum.

GrandMA (CONT'D)
Now then, Elisabeth, my girl. What
are we going to do with you?

30

INT. CONOR'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

30

Conor waits for the kettle. He looks out the window, where the yew tree sits innocently atop the hill. He hears raised voices from the sitting room.

30A EXT. CHURCHYARD HILLTOP / CONOR'S HOUSE - MORNING

30A

He stares HARD at the tree while his mum and grandma argue and the kettle whistle gains in intensity.

GrandMA (o.S.)
 ...this has gone on far too long,
 these things need to be discussed-

Mum (o.S.)
 Ma, I know what I'm doing-

GRANDMA (o.S.)
 Yes, all those marvelous impulsive
 decisions that never affect your
 life at all-

MUM (o.S.)
 Says the woman who schedules her
 toilet breaks. Seriously, Ma? We're
 having this conversation now?

GRANDMA (o.S.)
 I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I just-

MUM (o.S.)
 Go help Conor with the tea or I
 will literally go insane.

Kettle whistle sound stops as Grandma enters kitchen. She regards Conor, hands on hips.

GrandMA
 (beat, all business, voice
 low so mum can't listen)
 You and I need to have a talk.

Conor stiffens. This isn't the first time for this.

ConOR
 I'm making tea.

GRANDMA
 Conor-

CONOR
 I'm making tea.

GrandMA
 (snapping)
 We have to-
 (beat, gathers herself)
 I'm not your enemy, Conor. I'm here
 to help your mother.

CONOR

I know why you're here.

He grabs a cloth and starts furiously wiping the counter. Grandma snatches the cloth out of his hand. To his surprise, he sees that her hands are shaking.

GRANDMA

I'm here because 12-year-old boys shouldn't be wiping down counters without being asked to first.

ConOR

Were you going to do it?

GRANDMA

Less of your cheek-

CONOR

She's always sick after the treatments. She'll be better tomorrow. And then you can go home.

Grandma doesn't answer, just rubs her face, then her arms, keeping strong emotions in check. This is a woman whose daughter may be dying, after all.

Conor is so unsettled, he grabs another cloth and starts on the counter again.

GRANDMA

(barely controlled)

She'll seem better tomorrow. But she won't be.

Conor doesn't like this at all.

CONOR

Yes, she will. "You go through the rough stuff but it's for a good reason." That's what she says.

Grandma clearly wants to say much more but can't or won't.

GRANDMA

You need to talk to her about this.
(to herself)
She needs to talk about this with you.

CONOR

Talk to me about what?

GRANDMA

(beat)

About you coming to live with me.

There, the die is cast. Conor is furious.

CONOR
I'm never coming to live with you.

GRANDMA
Conor, listen to me, if your mother-

CONOR
There's no if. She'll feel better
and then you can leave-

GRANDMA
Conor-

A panicked call from the sitting room.

Mum (O.S.)
(distressed)
Ma? Mum?

A look of heartbreaking terror crosses Grandma's face, as she bolts, almost comically fast, out of the kitchen to her daughter. Conor follows, glancing out the window, where the tree is still a tree-

31 INT. CONOR'S SITTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

31

Conor enters the sitting room. Grandma is helping Mum up from the floor, Mum is in serious pain.

Mum
(gestures to mantel)
I need the Oromorph-

GRANDMA
(looking)
Which one?

Conor steps forward, points.

ConOR
That one. For the stabbing pains.

Quick, grim beat for Grandma and Mum that Conor knows this, then Grandma grabs a LIQUID PAINKILLER from the mantelpiece and starts to dose her daughter.

Mum pants as she swallows it, trying to catch her breath, ride out the pain. Grandma rubs her back.

GrandMA
It's okay, darling, it's okay, shh,
shh, shh.

Grandma looks up at Conor, her face set and unreadable.

32

InT. conor's sitting room - that evening

32

Grandma sets a meal, heavy on the celery, down in front of Conor and his Mum, who looks much more tired. They eat on trays in the sitting room.

Mum

A tray where joy goes to die.

GrandMA

It's good for you.

MUM

When in history has that ever worked?

Grandma's not listening. She's looking back at the projector.

GRANDMA

Are you just going to leave that hunk of junk in the middle of the sitting room?

MUM

It's not a hunk of junk. Dad loved it.

Grandma snorts, a little dismissively.

MUM (CONT'D)

But all those classics. King Kong, Frankenstein-

GRANDMA

When exactly do you think I was born? I was 18 years old when Star Wars came out. I have about as much interest in boring old films as Conor probably does.

(to Conor)

Right?

ConoR

(quietly)

King Kong was pretty good.

GRANDMA

(shaking her head, to Mum)

You and your father. Always chasing butterflies.

Mum

Yeah, well, you were always there to remind us we had chores to do.

GRANDMA

(stung)

And made sure there was food on the table.

Mum holds up limp celery, giggling with Conor. Grandma sees.

GrandMA (CONT'D)

Shall I just make you ice cream
sundaes that you'll throw back up?

(grabs pizza box, still
there from before)

Or order pizza that'll make sure
you've only got empty calories to
face more chemo with?

Mum

What's wrong with food that makes
me happy? Can't you let me enjoy
life a bit?

GRANDMA

(shocked)

Yes! I want you to enjoy it for a
long, long time.

MUM

(warning her about Conor)

Ma-

GRANDMA

Why is it so bad that I'd like you
to take care of yourself?

MUM

I don't know, is it so hard to
remember I'm a grown woman and can
make those decisions for myself?

GRANDMA

(shaking her head)

The irony of it. No one wants to be
like their parents, but we all
expect our kids to be exactly like
us.

(almost to herself)

No wonder it's always so hard.

Mum

(mumbles)

Daddy liked pizza.

This really hurts. Grandma stands, gathering the trays, even if they aren't finished.

Mum (CONT'D)

(regretful)

Ma, I'm-

Grandma disappears into the kitchen. Mum looks at Conor and sighs.

33

INT. conor's hallWAY/CONOR'S BEDROOM - that night

33

Conor stands outside his own bedroom as his grandma hands him his blankets. Her bag is partially unpacked on his own bed.

ConOR

Just don't touch anything.

GraNDMA

Trust me, I'll be doing my very best not to.

She hands him a last pillow.

GraNDMA (CONT'D)

Our conversation isn't over, young man.

She gives him a "to be continued" look and shuts the door.

ConOR

(quietly)

Oh, yes, it is.

Fade to bLACK.

Sounds fade up

Nightmare sounds, wind, roaring screaming, rising again in crescendo to:

34 INT. CONOR'S SITTING ROOM - THAT NIGHT

34

Conor sits up, sweating, panting again. The sitting room is dark. Conor calms himself where he sleeps on the settee.

He looks around the dim, untidy room. We can see plenty of get well cards on the shelves, plus tumblers of smart chicklit, his mum's CD collection (90s rave, Massive Attack, Blur), some of her drawings.

Conor glances impatiently at the clock display on the DVD player. It clicks over from 12.06 to 12.07.

A breeze tousles Conor's hair. He listens for the Monster.

And listens.

And listens.

Nothing. The clock ticks over to 12.08. He sees a pen rolling across the top of the DVD player. Other things, including his shoe, start rolling towards the kitchen.

Conor gets to his feet, blanket wrapped around him. He goes into...

35 Int. conor'S KITCHEN - contINUOUS

35

...the kitchen. The kitchen roll and a cup from the table are rolling towards the door outside. It rattles, too. Conor opens it.

35A INT./EXT. CONOR'S KITCHEN /BACK GARDEN - NIGHT

35A

The Monster is waiting for him.

MONSTER

What took you so long?

35B EXT. CONOR'S BACK GARDEN - continuous

35B

Conor exits into his back garden. The Monster towers over him again.

MonsteR

It is time for me to tell you the first tale.

ConOR

(disgusted)

What good does that do me? I don't need a story-

(looks up to his bedroom)

I need a bus ticket for my grandma.

MONSTER

(more strongly)

It is time for me to tell you the first tale-

Conor turns away.

MonSTER (CONT'D)

Where do you think you're going? I will be listened to! I have been alive as long as this land and you will-

CONOR

(turns back, angry)

What do you know about anything?

MONSTER

I know about you, Conor O'Malley.

CONOR

No, you don't. If you did, you'd know I don't have time to listen to stupid stories from a stupid tree that isn't even real.

MONSTER

Were the leaves on your floor real? Were the berries?

CONOR

Who cares if they were! They were berries. Ohhh, so scary, save me from the berries!

MONSTER

How strange. The words you say tell me you are scared of the berries but your actions suggests otherwise.

CONOR
 You're as old as the land and
 you've never heard of sarcasm?

The monster doesn't know how to answer that.

ConOR (CONT'D)
 (giving up)
 Never mind... I saw you when I was
 talking to my grandma, and I
 thought...

MonsteR
 You thought I came to topple your
 enemies. Slay your dragons.

Conor frowns. This is obviously true.

ConOR
 Or at least help me with my
 grandmother. But all you want to do
 is tell me stupid stories.

MONSTER
 Stories of how I toppled enemies.
 Stories of how I slew dragons.

The Monster leans down until its face is close to Conor's.

MONSTER (CONT'D)
 Let me tell you a tale of when I
 came walking. Let me tell you of
 the end of a wicked queen and how I
 made sure she was never seen again.

The Monster looks up to Conor's bedroom, where grandma
 sleeps. Conor follows his gaze.

ConOR
 Go on then.

The Monster grins his evil grin. The Monster puts his hands
 on the ground. Branches, leaves, twigs start to twine around
 Conor. A branch with leaves covers Conor's eyes.

MONSTER
 What do you see?

CONOR
 Nothing. There are leaves in the
 way.

MONSTER
 Use your imagination. What do you
 see?

36 BLACKNESS, conor's vision - contINUOUS

36

We cut to blackness, what Conor is seeing. There's nothing.
Then there's a small light.

CONOR

I see a spark.

MONSTER

Yes? And?

The spark seems reflected on water.

CONOR

No, it's water. It's watercolour.

MONSTER

Keep looking.

A world starts to appear: the light on the water becomes the sun reflected on a brook. Pull out to see that - though the world is an abstract, water-colour-like landscape, we can recognise the hilltop behind Conor's house with a younger, smaller yew tree on it.

ConOR

Whoa.

MonSTER

Whoa, indeed.

We zoom up to...

37 EXT. First Tale Hilltop - DAY

37

...the water-colour hilltop itself, turning to look down at an empty valley below. All the modern houses and roads are gone, but there's a small VILLAGE and a looming CASTLE. The abstract style remains for the entire tale.

MONSTER (V.O.)

Long ago, before this was a town
with roads and trains and cars, it
was a kingdom.

ConOR (V.O.)

Here? We don't even have a Tesco.

We race down the hill, over the village and towards the Castle, swooping over moats and turrets before finding a window, rushing through it and...

38 InT. first tale castle hallway - CONTINUOUS

38

...down a hallway, passing maids and servants and the
business of a castle before stopping in the...

39 InT. first tale throne room - CONTINUOUS

39

...throne room, where a KING sits on a throne.

MONSTER (V.O.)

It was a happy kingdom, with a wise
king who had won peace for his
people. But peace had come at a
price.

40 Ext. first tale battlefield 1 - day - CONTINUOUS

40

A battlefield of armies fighting.

Monster (v.o.)

The king had lost all three of his
sons in battle. To giants.

A FIRST SON of the king is killed by a giant.

41 EXT. first tale battlefield 2 - daY - CONTINUOUS

41

A different battlefield in a different place.

Monster (v.o.)
To dragons.

A SECOND SON of the king is killed by a dragon.

42 EXT. first tale battlefield 3 - day - continuous 42

A final battlefield, one army fighting another led by a terrible wizard.

 Monster (v.O.)
 To armies of men led by great
 wizards.

The battle commences, hard-fought and chaotic.

42A EXT. conor's baCK GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

42A

Conor grabs at the leaves covering his eyes.

Conor

This is all sounding pretty fairy
tale-ish.

MONSTER

You wouldn't say that if you heard
the screams of a man killed by a
spear.

42B EXT. first tale battlefield 3 - day - continuous 42B

A THIRD SON of the king is run through with a spear. The screams are terrible. We return to...

43 InT. first tale THRONE ROOM - day - CONTINUOUS

43

The King sits forlorn on his throne again.

MonSTER (V.O.)

The king's sole remaining heir was
his orphaned grandson.

ANGLE ON: the toddler PRINCE, playing with a wooden toy
dragon. The King watches him affectionately. Pan to reveal a
QUEEN, sitting to the King's right.

MonSTER (v.O.) (cont'd)

The King had taken a wife in
peacetime, his first having died of
heartbreak at the loss of all her
sons.

The KING leaps from his throne to play with the PRINCE. The
QUEEN watches, detached.

MONSTER (v.O.) (cont'd) (CONT'D)

And if the new Queen's tongue was a
bit sharp, she was at least young
and fair and made the King happy.

We pull back out the hallway we came in and into:

44 Ext. first tale countryside - day - contINUOUS

44

The young prince runs playfully through the countryside, the King in pursuit. These images continue as the Prince ages: the Prince with a dog, the Prince hunting his first stag, the Prince winning his first joust as a 17-year-old.

Monster (V.O.)

The Prince grew until he was nearly a man, winning the love of the kingdom for his gallantry and good heart. But one day, the old king fell ill.

In the audience for the joust, the king suddenly collapses.

45 InT. first tale THRONE ROOM - day - contINUOUS

45

The King, now in a sickbed tended by the Queen.

 MonSTER (V.O.)

Rumour began to spread that he was
being poisoned by his wife. That
she was an evil witch, bent on
taking the throne for herself.

The Queen gives the King medicine. Or is it poison?

 MonSTER (v.O.) (cont'd)

But the King loved her and even
with his dying breath, he begged
his subjects not to blame her.

The King has his dying breath. We rush back out of the throne
room to...

46

Ext. first tale COUNTRYSIDE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

46

...the Kingdom, in mourning, shadowy rain coming down. We find the Prince, looking up at the castle.

MonSTER (v.O.)

The Prince was too young to take his place yet as King. The Queen would rule as Regent for another year. The future was uncertain.

The FARMER'S DAUGHTER approaches the Prince. He greets her with a flower.

MonSTER (V.O.)

The Prince, meanwhile, had given away his heart-

Conor (V.O.)

(groaning)

I knew it. There's always some stupid prince falling in stupid love, ruining everything-

MONSTER (V.O.)

(louder)

The Prince, meanwhile, had given away his heart-

The Prince sweeps the Farmer's Daughter up in romance, running flirtatiously through orchards, exchanging love letters, parting with sweet sorrow...

Monster (v.O.) (cont'd)

She was beautiful and smart and though only a farmer's daughter, the kingdom smiled on the match.

We rush back up to the castle, through the hallway and into:

47 InT. first TALE THRONE ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

47

The Queen, sitting on her throne, dispensing queenliness.

MONSTER (v.o.)

The Queen, however, had other ideas. She was rather enjoying being Queen. And what better way to remain so than to marry the prince herself?

CONOR (V.O.)

WHAT?! That's disgusting! She was his grandmother!

Queen on throne, offering this objectionable plan to Prince.

MONSTER (V.O.)

Step-grandmother, no relation, and still a young, beautiful woman herself, don't forget. The Prince, however, didn't like the idea either.

We rush out of the castle and into...

48 EXT. first TALE COUNTRYSIDE - night - CONTINUOUS 48

...a stormy night. The Prince saddles a horse and helps up
the Farmer's Daughter.

 Monster (V.O.)
 He took the farmer's daughter and
 they rode away into the night-

They ride through the storm, before taking shelter on...

49

Ext. first TALE HILLTOP - night - CONTINUOUS

49

...the hilltop where the yew tree stands. The Prince and the Farmer's Daughter shelter at the base, under blankets.

MonSTER (v.O.)

Stopping only to shelter themselves
under the branches of a yew tree.
They slept.

Sleeping is pretty clearly not what they're doing under the blanket.

ConOR

Yeah, I don't think they're
sleeping.

MonsteR (V.O.)

They slept. Eventually.

The Prince and the Farmer's Daughter sleep. The image stills as time passes and...

50

Ext. first TALE HILLTOP - DAY - CONTINUOUS

50

...the sun comes up. The Prince wakes.

MONSTER (V.O.)

The next morning, the Prince woke.
"Arise, my beloved," he said.

The Prince mirrors the Monster's words.

MONSTER (V.O.) (cont'd)

But the farmer's daughter did not stir.

The Farmer's Daughter slumps. CLOSE ON: The Prince's bloodied hand.

MONSTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Which was when the Prince noticed the blood.

CONOR (V.O.)

Blood?

The Prince stands. Blood everywhere.

MONSTER (V.O.)

Someone had killed his beloved in the night and made him look like the murderer. "The Queen!" he cried. "The Queen is responsible for this treachery!"

The Prince mirrors the Monster's words. Men approach from a distance.

MONSTER (v.O.) (cont'd)

He saw men approaching and knew they'd been sent to arrest him.

Conor (v.O.)

And the queen would be able to rule on her own! I hope this story ends with you ripping her head off.

The Prince looks around in panic.

MONSTER (v.O.)

There was nowhere for the Prince to run. His horse had been chased away. He turned to the only place he could look for help.

The Prince looks up at the yew tree.

CONOR (V.O.)

You?

The Prince talks to the tree. We don't hear what he says. The tree remains a tree.

ConOR (v.O.) (cont'd)
What did he say?

MonSTER (v.O.)
He said enough to bring me walking.

We rush away from hilltop and down into...

51 EXT. first TALE COUNTRYSIDE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

51

...the Prince racing through the countryside.

MONSTER (V.O.)

He ran through the villages. "The Queen has murdered my bride! The Queen must be stopped!"

Behind the Prince, the Monster comes, terrifying, huge.

MONSTER (v.O.) (cont'd)

The people were quick to rally to the Prince when they saw the great Green Man behind him, high as the hills, coming for vengeance.

The Prince leads the villagers to a storming of the castle, the Monster behind them. It tears down the castle walls. Flames rise, turrets tumble, until we ANGLE ON: the terrified Queen screaming in the Monster's upraised hand.

MONSTER (CONT'D)

The Queen was never seen again.

52-52A EXT. CONOR'S BACK GARDEN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

52-52A

Conor pushes away the leaves and looks up to the Monster.

CONOR
Good! She deserved it!

He turns to the upstairs bedroom where his Grandma sleeps.

CONOR (CONT'D)
I don't suppose you can help me
with her? I mean, I don't want you
to burn her at the stake or
anything-

MONSTER
The story is not yet finished.

Conor turns to the Monster, confused.

CONOR
But you said the Queen was never
seen again.

MONSTER
Indeed.

The Monster puts the leaves back over Conor's eyes. We rush
back into...

53 EXT. First TALE HILLTOP - DAY - CONTINUOUS

53

...the Castle burns in the background as the Monster, still holding the Queen, walks away from it.

MONSTER (v.O.)

I carried her far enough away so
that her people would never find
her-

The Queen looks quite safe in the Monster's hands.

MONSTER (v.O.) (cont'd)

To a village by the sea, where she
began a new life.

54 EXT. conor'S BACK GARDEN - night - CONTINUOUS

54

Conor is outraged, pushes the leaves away again.

Conor
But she killed the Farmer's
Daughter! How can you save a
murderer?

He tries to step back from the Monster in dawning fright.

ConOR (CONT'D)
You really are a monster.

MONSTER
I never said she killed the
farmer's daughter. I only said that
the Prince said it was so.

The Monster twists some branches into a frame. Conor watches
it like a television. We move through the frame into:

55 EXT. first TALE HILLTOP - night - CONTINUOUS

55

The Prince and the Farmer's Daughter, sleeping, as before.

MONSTER (V.O.)

The Prince never fell asleep that
night.

The Prince rises and looks down at the Farmer's Daughter. He goes to his tied-up horse and retrieves something, setting the horse free in the process.

MONSTER

But waiting for the Farmer Daughter
to be lost in her dreams and then
began his real plan.

CLOSE ON: A KNIFE glinting in the Prince's hand as he approaches the sleeping Farmer's Daughter.

Conor (V.O.)

NO!

We rush back from the hilltop to...

56

EXT. conor's back GARDEN - night - CONTINUOUS

56

Conor watches in shock as the scene fades on the hilltop, the Monster lowering his hands.

Conor

You said he was surprised when he woke up!

MONSTER

He was merely acting out a pantomime should anyone be watching.

CONOR

But... but you said he asked you for help and you gave it!

MONSTER

I only said he told me enough to make me come walking. I never said I came to help him.

CONOR

What did he say then?

MONSTER

He said it was for the good of the kingdom. That the queen was, in fact, a witch, too powerful to topple on his own, so he killed the Farmer's Daughter to get the fury of the people behind him. Just as the King's sons had died in battle, the Farmer's Daughter had given her life to a greater good.

ConOR

That's a load of crap!

MONSTER

The justifications of men who kill should always be heard with scepticism.

ConOR

Did he ever get caught?

MONSTER

He became a much beloved king who ruled happily until the end of his long days.

Conor unhappily considers all this.

CONOR

So the good prince was a murderer
and the evil queen wasn't a witch
after all?

The Monster begins to rumble, louder and louder, until we realise it's laughing, a laugh that shakes the earth, spooking owls from their perches, causing leaves to fall.

MonSTER

(calming some)

No, the Queen most certainly was a
witch and could well have been on
her way to great evil. Who can say?

ConOR

Why'd you save her then?

MonSTER

Because what she was not, was a
murderer. She hadn't poisoned the
king. He had merely grown old.

ConOR

I don't get it. Who's the good guy
here?

MONSTER

There is not always a good guy. Nor
is there always a bad one. Most
people are somewhere inbetween.

CoNOR

That's a terrible story. And a
cheat.

MONSTER

It's a true story. Many things that
are true feel like a cheat.
Kingdoms get the princes they
deserve, farmer's daughters die for
no reason, and sometimes witches
merit saving. Quite often,
actually. You'd be surprised.

Conor glances unhappily up to his bedroom window again.

CONOR

So how is that supposed to save me
from her?

MONSTER (o.S.)

It is not her you need saving from.

Conor turns back to the Monster, but he's gone. On the hilltop, the yew tree is back in place, as if nothing had happened. Which is annoying.

57

Ext. pavement CONVERSATION WITH LILY - the next DAY

57

Conor walks to school, rucksack on his back, stopping to look at the PENCIL CASE again. He starts walking as Lily catches up to him. She doesn't say anything at first, just waits for his response. Gets none.

LILY
I forgive you.

Conor says nothing, just walks on.

LILY (CONT'D)
I forgive you for getting me in trouble, okay?

Conor
You got yourself in trouble.

Lily
(ignoring this)
And I forgive you for all the things you said, too.

Conor remains silent. Lily is defiant, but hopeful.

LILY (CONT'D)
Aren't you going to say you're sorry back?

Conor stops, and his anger backs Lily into a nearby wall.

Conor
I'm not sorry, and I don't forgive you.

LILY
My mum said we need to make allowances for you, but I just think you're acting like a jerk-

CONOR
I was doing just fine before you screwed everything up.

LILY
(baffled)
Me?!

CONOR
No one knew, Lily. No one. And then your mum tells you and then guess what? Suddenly everybody knows-

LILY
About your mum-?

CONOR

(over)

-and now they all treat me like I'm
the sick one or that I'm not really
there or...

He stops, choked up, angry about it. He takes off again,
leaving Lily behind.

58 InT. Physical Social and Education CLASS - day - later 58

Mr. Clark is patrolling the classroom. Total silence, all pupils concentrated on their papers.

MR. CLARK

10 more minutes to hand in your exams.

The kids are doing a test. Conor at the end of the classroom, has his headphones on and is drawing on the exam paper. Mr. Clark sees him. Conor looks up as if sensing him. Beat. Mr. Clark approaches Conor but when it looks like he is going to tell him off he turns his back to him and heads back to the front of the room. Harry has watched the whole exchange.

59

InT. School CORRIDOR FIRST FLOOR - day - later

59

Conor moving from one classroom to another. Alone. He gets a few confused looks from others, but no one speaks to him.

60 Omitted

60

61 EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY - later

61

Conor stands by himself again. He looks around until he sees Harry, Anton and Sully come out of a door together. He seems almost to relax. Then, surprisingly, he heads over in their direction.

62

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY - moments laTER

62

Conor falls to the pavement again. He gets to one knee, a tear in his trousers. SULLY and ANTON are laughing. HARRY, as usual, stares with odd focus at Conor.

SULLY
 Seriously, O'Malley. All this
 falling!

Anton
 You drunk or something?

Conor sees classmates filing back into the building, Lily among them. She looks at him. Then looks away.

HarRY
 O'Malley isn't drunk, no. He just
 likes playing with us. Why is that,
 O'Malley?

Sully reaches for the rising Conor to cause more mischief.

HarRY (CONT'D)
 Don't touch him.

SuLLY
 Don't touch him? But it's such a
 punchable face-

Sully steps towards Conor. Conor clinches A FIST-

HARRY
 (firmly)
 I said, don't touch him.

Sully immediately steps back.

Harry (CONT'D)
 O'Malley and I have an
 understanding. I'm the only one who
 touches him. Isn't that right?

Conor says nothing, but this does seem to be the agreement.

AnTON
 Harry, come on-

HARRY
 No, you see, there's something I
 want to find out.

Harry steps closer. Conor doesn't back away.

Harry raises a fist as if to strike Conor. Again, Conor doesn't flinch, just waits for the punch.

Beat. Harry drops his fist.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Yeah. That's what I thought.

Then he swings a fast, vicious punch to Conor which we don't see connect-

Cut TO:

63 InT. conor's house front hallway - later

63

Conor enters, home from school, some bruising on his face, but hasn't even shut the door before Grandma is on him.

GRANDMA
(brusque, businesslike)
Good, you're home. Your mum's upstairs. She wants to talk to you.

CONOR
What-

GRANDMA
(putting a phone to her ear)
Your father's flying in on Sunday.

CONOR
Dad's coming? From America?

GRANDMA
(unhappy)
Yes, and I get to arrange it. Lucky me. Go. Your mum's waiting.

Grandma exits to the sitting room.

CONOR
Why is my dad coming?

GRANDMA
(closing door behind her)
And pack a bag. You're coming to stay with me for a few days.

Then she's gone. Conor stands for a moment, shellshocked.

64

INT. conor's hallway/MUM'S BEDROOM - moments Later

64

Conor approaches the door to his mum's bedroom. He's badly disconcerted. He puts his hand on the knob but waits for a moment. He takes a deep breath, opens the door-

BOOM! Inside is entirely taken over by the NIGHTMARE: blackness, roaring and screaming, a horrible deafening noise churning the blackness, a voice calling "Conor!" in terror-

Conor calls out and slams the door.

Mum (o.s.)
(from Conor's room)
Conor? I'm in here.

Conor breathes heavy for a moment. He opens his mum's door a crack. It's normal. He closes it and goes to his own bedroom.

65

INT. CONOR'S BEDROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

65

His mum, in a TERRIBLE TINA TURNER-ESQUE WIG, lies on his bed, looking out at the yew tree, SKETCHING ON CONOR'S SKETCHPAD.

MUM

Hi, sweetheart. Come sit.

He sits down next to her on the bed. She's sketching the yew tree. The drawing is half-finished, but really excellent.

Mum (CONT'D)

(w/o turning)

Yew trees are amazing, you know. Live for thousands of years. And they're always planted in churchyards because the-

CONOR

(finishes, heard it a thousand times)

-berries are poisonous so they have to be kept away from cows and stuff.

MUM

No, that's just the official version. The real reason is that yew trees dig their roots down into the graves and take all the things the dead wish they could have said and spread them into the world through their leaves.

CONOR

(skeptical)

Uh-huh.

Mum turns and smiles at him, exhausted, setting down the half-finished sketch. Conor gives a horrified look at the wig on her head. She laughs.

MUM

I know. Tina Turner. If she was from Sheffield.

CONOR

I don't really know who that is.

65A Ext. ChurchYARD HILLTOP / conor's house - day

65A

Mum tugs the wig off, laughing, tying a scarf on her head. They both look at the tree.

Mum starts stroking his hair.

ConOR

Why am I going to stay with
Grandma? Are you going back to
hospital?

Mum

(sighs lovingly)
We've been here before, sweetheart.
I feel really bad and I go in and
they take care of it.

CONOR

Then why is dad coming?

Mum pauses in the hair stroking, but picks right back up.

MUM

Aren't you excited?

CONOR

Grandma doesn't seem too happy.

MUM

(snorts)
Well, you know how she feels about
your father. Don't listen to her.

Beat, silence. Conor braces himself.

CONOR

There's something else, isn't
there?

Mum quickly, forcefully, cuts off his worry.

MuM

Look at me, son.

He does.

Mum (CONT'D)

The latest treatment's not doing
what it's supposed to. So they're
going to adjust it, try something
else. That's all.

ConoR

That's all?

MUM

(nodding)

That's all. There's lots more they can do. It's normal. Don't worry.

CONOR

You're sure?

MUM

I'm sure.

CONOR

Because... You could tell me, you know.

And here's the moment, where she could tell him everything.

But she can't, not yet.

MUM

I remember when you were a little baby, and it was just the two of us. And you'd get, like, a fever or something. I used to get so scared. I was really, really young - only six years older than you, if you can believe it - and this was a time when things weren't going so great. Your dad was gone and I wasn't speaking to your Grandma. And I kept thinking, What if I get this wrong? It'd be the middle of the night and I wouldn't know what to do, I'd have no one to ask, no one to lean on. And do you know what I'd always do? I'd look into your eyes, into your little baby eyes, and I'd say, "We're a team, me and you. We're in this together." And I'd still be scared, but it didn't matter so much anymore. Because you were counting on me, and that was the only thing that mattered.

(rubs his head)

Still is.

She leans up, puts an arm around him, her head on his shoulder. They both look out at the tree.

MUM (CONT'D)

I'll bet that old tree will keep an eye on the house for us while you're at your grandma's.

Conor's expression is priceless. His mum grabs him and turns him to her, faux-serious.

Mum (CONT'D)

But for God's sake, whatever you
do, don't touch your grandmother's
clock.

Cut TO:

66-66A EXT./INT. Grandma's DRIVEWAY/sitting room - days later 66-66A

The face of Grandma's prize grandfather clock. It's against the wall of a pristine sitting room, every surface clean and museum-like, including glass display cases with figurines, low bookcases, porcelain knickknacks. The polar opposite of Conor's warmly untidy house. Conor leans on the doorframe.

Grandma very carefully SETS HER WRISTWATCH by the clock (not vice versa).

GrandMA

(looking at clock)

I've got a house to show. I'm trusting you here alone until your dad shows up.

Conor

I'm not five years old.

GRANDMA

(ignores this, finishes with watch)

This is the correct time. Not the one on your computer, or even the one on the news. Right here. I almost got this on Antiques Roadshow once. It belong to my mother - your gear-grandmother. Perfect time keeping for over a hundred years.

Conor rolls his eyes. A VERY old story. She brushes past him:

67

Int. grandma's front hallway - CONTINUOUS

67

She glides smoothly to a mirror, checking how she looks. On the wall, we might notice some pictures of her and her family, including one of her with CONOR'S GRANDFATHER, played by the same actor as the Monster.

GrandMA

Pick up your rucksack, please.
Don't want your father to think I'm
keeping you in a pigsty.

ConOR

(muttering)

Not much chance of that.

His Grandma opens a front closet, puts on a coat.

GrandMA

Now, Conor, when you go to the
hospital, your father may not
notice how tired your mum's been
getting, okay? So we're going to
have to make sure he doesn't
overstay his welcome.

Final check in the mirror.

GrandMA (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Not that that's historically been a
problem.

She gives one last appraising look at Conor.

Grandma (CONT'D)

If you get hungry before your dad
gets here, there's steamed broccoli
in the fridge. No eggs. You've
already had eggs twice this week.

(frowns, sighs)

Be good.

And lets herself out.

68 InT. grandMA'S Kitchen - moments LATER

68

Montage as Conor looks around his Grandma's house for something to do. First in her spotless kitchen, cupboards full of nothing a boy might like to eat.

69

INT. grandma's kiTCHEN - momENTS LATER

69

Conor now stands on the counter-top, digging deep into a cupboard. He finds a packet of cookies.

CONOR

Get in.

70

InT. grandma's TV room - moments LATER

70

Conor in a sterile TV room, eating the cookies. Only dull channels (BBC, Living) are available. Every channel he wants to watch blocked by a PIN code.

71 InT. grandma's guEST ROOM - momENTS LATER

71

Conor opens the door to his temporary bedroom. His suitcase is open, clothes removed, but the room is bright white, pictures of sailboats on the wall. It could be a hotel room.

72

EXT. grandma's back garden - moments LATER

72

Conor steps out into his Grandma's back garden which has no green space at all, just stone paths, sheds and an office she's had built in the back.

No hilltop on the horizon. No tree to be seen anywhere.

73

INT. grandma's CORRIDOR, upstairs - moments LATER

73

Conor climbs the steep steps up to the door of Grandma's loft conversion. It's locked. He can't believe it.

He tries to look through the keyhole, but can only see glimpses of a room inside.

Then Conor JUMPS at the sound of the DOORBELL. He hurries down the stairs to...

74 InT. grandMA'S FRONT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

74

...the front door. He opens it on: HIS DAD, late thirties,
handsome, slightly too boyish for his own good.

Conor's gives him a genuinely free smile.

75

INT. CHINESE Restaurant - later that EVENING

75

Conor and his Dad sit at a table, waiting for their food. Dad has a glass of RED WINE, Conor a clear soft drink. Dad isn't quite sure how to talk to this son he doesn't see very often. His accent is HALF-IRISH/HALF-AMERICAN.

DAD

How you hanging in there, champ?

ConOR

"Champ"?

DAD

Sorry. America is almost a whole different language.

Dad fidgets with his wine glass. Conor drums lightly with his chopsticks.

Dad (CONT'D)

Your mom seemed pretty good tonight. A real fighter, that one.

Conor shrugs.

DAD (CONT'D)

You look tired, Con. How are you holding up?

ConOR

That's like the eight hundredth time you've asked me that.

DAD

Sorry.

CONOR

I'm fine. Mum's on this new medicine. It'll make her better. Why is everyone acting like she's...

He stops. Takes a drink.

DAD

"Everyone"?

CONOR

Grandma. Wants me to come live with her.

DAD

You mean when your mum-

CONOR

If.

DAD

(takes the correction)

If your mum...

CONOR

But that's not going to happen.

DAD

Still. You're going to need to be brave for her. You're going to need to be real, real brave.

CONOR

You talk like American television.

Dad takes this in good humour.

DAD

Your sister's doing well. Almost sitting up by herself.

CONOR

Half-sister.

DAD

I can't wait for you to meet her. I've been talking to your grandma about getting you out to LA.

Conor looks up surprised and with nascent hope.

ConOR

You want me to come to LA?

DAD

Absolutely! Would you like that? I was thinking maybe over Christmas, so we can get you back in time for school...

Dad smiles, pleased he's connected. Then he blows it.

CONOR

(suspicious)

But... you mean... just for a visit, then.

DAD

Yeah, it'll be great...

Beat as he realizes that's not what Conor was hoping for.

CONOR

I don't want to live with Grandma. It's an old lady's house.

(MORE)

CONOR (CONT'D)

You can't touch anything or sit anywhere and you can't leave a mess for even two seconds.

DAD

We can talk to her about that. I'm sure there are plenty of ways to make you comfortable-

CONOR

I don't want to be comfortable! I want my own room in my own house.

DAD

(wincing)

You wouldn't have that in America. We barely have room for the three of us. Besides, your school is here, your life is here. It'd be unfair to take you out of it.

CONOR

Unfair to who?

DAD

(sighing)

This is what I meant. When I said you were going to have to be brave.

conor

(pouring cold water)

Can we talk about the visit when mum gets better?

Dad, resigned, can't find the strength to talk to Conor honestly. Gives in.

DAD

Of course, champ. That's exactly what we'll do.

A WAITRESS sets their meals down in front of them. Neither of them make a move to eat.

76

EXT. Grandma's House - later that EVENING

76

Conor and his Dad pull up outside his Grandma's house in his father's rental car.

Dad

Doesn't look like your Grandma's home yet.

ConOR

She sometimes goes back to the hospital after I go to bed. The nurses let her sleep in a chair.

DAD

Your Grandma may not like me much, but that doesn't mean she's a bad lady.

CONOR

She says you're all start and no finish.

DAD

(laughs, wounded)
That might be true.

CONOR

How long are you here for?

DAD

As long as I can.

CONOR

How much is that?

DAD

(sighing)
We don't have a ton of money. And Americans don't get much holiday.

CONOR

You're not American.

DAD

But I live there now. You're the one who made fun of my accent all night.

CONOR

Why did you come then?

DAD

Because your Mum asked me to.

Beat, as seriousness of this is absorbed.

Dad (CONT'D)
I'll come back, though. You know,
when I need to. And you'll visit us
at Christmas!

ConOR
In your cramped house, where
there's no room for me.

DAD
Conor-

CONOR
(again)
Why did you come?

Dad doesn't answer. Reaches out to put a hand on Conor's
shoulder, but Conor avoids it and gets out of the car.

DAD
(through open door)
Conor, wait. I'll see you tomorrow,
yeah? There's still plenty of time.

Conor doesn't really believe this. He shuts the car door.

77

INT. GRANDMA'S SITTING ROOM - EVENING - MOMENTS LATER

77

We hear Conor come in the front door. He enters the sitting room, slumping down unhappily on the settee.

He takes off his coat, but ends up fighting with the sleeve. He stands, getting frustrated, eventually throwing the coat to the floor. He stands there, breathing, on the verge of letting all his bottled up anger go.

Almost absentmindedly, he kicks his rucksack (set against the settee). It spills open, dumping his sketchpad, which opens at a drawing of the swallowing hole and the face looking back. Enraged, he tears the picture out and rips it in two, throwing the pieces into the sitting room.

He's still angry, and it's growing, not abating. It feels strangely good. He flexes his fists, anger still fizzing. Suddenly, BONG! BONG! The precious CLOCK starts striking the 9 o'clock hour.

Conor approaches it. It chimes away, the pendulum swinging. Still edgy, Conor grabs it mid-swing. The bongs continue, but the clock makes a groaning sound.

Holding the pendulum in place, Conor starts pushing the dials of the clock around. They resist at first, but he pushes them harder and faster, until they're spinning around the face. The BONGS groan alarmingly as he passes each hour, but he keeps going, faster and faster, until-

SNAP! The second hand breaks in two in his grip.

Oh, no. Conor comes to his senses, realises what he's done. The clock is broken, really broken, frozen in place.

He's doomed, and so horrified he doesn't register that the now non-moving hands have stopped at 12.07.

MONSTER (o.S.)

As destruction goes, this is
remarkably pitiful.

Conor turns and sees that somehow, impossibly, the Monster is in his Grandma's sitting room. It fills up all available space, folding its massive form into every corner, its head bumping the ceiling.

Conor looks back at the clock, frantic now.

MONSTER (CONT'D)

Now, I have come to tell you the
second tale.

Conor makes an exasperated sound. He's got bigger things to worry about.

ConOR
Is it as bad as the last one?

MONSTER
It ends in proper destruction, if
that's what you mean.

This has Conor's attention, somewhat, but he shakes his head.

ConOR
No, I can't, I-

MonSTER
It's about a man who thought only
of himself. A man who wasn't
generous like he should have been.

The Monster leans forward.

MonSTER (CONT'D)
A man who gets punished very badly
indeed.

ConOR
(intrigued, skeptical)
Stories aren't real, though. They
don't help anything.

MonSTER
Stories are wild creatures, Conor
O'Malley. When you let them loose,
who knows what havoc they might
wreak?

Another beat, until:

ConOR
I'm listening.

MoNSTER
Good.

The Monster's branches surround Conor again, leaves covering
his eyes and we're-

78

EXT. Second Tale landscape - daY - continuous

78

...flying over far more colourful landscape than before, but this time it's GREEN and VERDANT and more realistic, like an oil painting.

MonSTER (v.O.)

One hundred and fifty years ago the world was becoming industrialized.

The green ends as we plunge through the trees into "industry" on the valley floor: black factories belching smoke and fumes, scraggly silhouettes of crows and trodden-down workers, fish jumping in polluted rivers.

Monster (v.O.)

But there was still green, if you knew where to look.

We come out the other side to a surprisingly quiet GREEN HILLSIDE. We turn and see that Conor and the Monster are now standing in the landscape, their figures realistic, not stylised, as the Monster draws Conor's attention to:

ANGLE ON: The APOTHECARY, walking up the hillside. A more realistic figure than the first tale, but still stylized.

Monster (V.O.)

His name is not important. The villagers only ever called him The Apothecary.

Conor (V.O.)

The what?

MONSTER (V.O.)

The Apothecary.

CONOR (V.O.)

The what?

MonSTER (v.O.)

An old-fashioned named for pharmacist or chemist.

CONOR (v.O.)

Oh. Why didn't you just say?

The Apothecary digs up roots and picks leaves and herbs.

MONSTER (v.O.)

The Apothecary dealt in the old ways of medicine. Herbs and roots. Concoctions brewed from berries and leaves.

CONOR (v.O.)

Dad's new wife does that. She owns
a shop that sells crystals.

MONSTER (V.O.)

It is not remotely the same.

The Apothecary reaches the edge of a wood and sees it
drastically cut back for the industry below.

MonSTER (v.O.)

The Apothecary had dedicated his
life to healing. But the world was
changing. He grew resentful and
unforgiving.

79 EXT. second tale village - day - CONTINUOUS

79

The Apothecary peddles his wares to various villagers. We get a sense of bad-temper and bitterness.

MONSTER (v.o.)

People in the valley stopped
seeking him out, preferring modern
medicine. Which only made him more
bitter.

The Apothecary, doors slamming against him, slouches off alone. We pull back across the valley to...

80

EXT. second tale HILLTOP fringe - DAY - CONTINUOUS

80

...the same hilltop as behind Conor's house, but this time there is a parsonage beside the yew tree, and the beginnings of a church being built. Conor and the Monster stand off to one side, in the landscape again.

MONSTER

In the Apothecary's village, there also lived a parson-

CONOR

This is the hill where you live.
(on the 2nd yew tree)
That's you.

MONSTER

Yes. On the parsonage grounds there also grew a yew tree.

Two small figures run out playfully from the parsonage, chasing each other, running up a path away from us towards the yew tree in the graveyard.

MONSTER (CONT'D)

The parson had two daughters, who were the light of his life.

CONOR

I'll bet he had room for them in his house...

We move forward and CLOSE ON:

The Apothecary, watching the yew tree intently.

Monster (V.O.)
Now, the Apothecary wanted the
parson's yew tree very badly.

Conor (v.O.)
He did? Why?

Monster (v.O.)
(surprised)
The yew tree is the most important
of all the healing trees. Its
berries, its bark, they burn and
twist with life. It can cure almost
any ailment, if mixed by the right
apothecary, of course.

ConOR (v.O.)
(thinking)
Really?

The Apothecary looks enviously at the tree.

MonSTER (V.O.)
In order to use the tree, though,
the Apothecary would have to cut it
down, and this the Parson would not
allow.

The PARSON comes out warningly; the Apothecary leaves.

MONSTER (V.O.)
The Parson was not an unkind man.
He wanted the best for his
congregation, wanted to take them
out of the dark ages of
superstition and witchery.

We zoom in on the Parson figure and he's suddenly...

82 InT. second tale pulpit - daY - CONTINUOUS

82

...preaching to his congregation.

 MonSTER (V.O.)

 He preached against the
 Apothecary's use of the old ways,
 and the Apothecary's foul temper
 and greed made certain those
 sermons fell on eager ears.

We pull out from the pulpit, through a celebratory
congregation, out of the CHURCH to...

83 EXT. second tale countryside - day - continuous 83
 ...The Apothecary slinking away. We keep pulling back to:

84 EXT. seCOND TALE HILLTOP - night - conTINUOUS

84

The parsonage is now a drab and grey place.

MonSTER (V.O.)

But then the parson's daughters
were struck by a terrible sickness.

Figures move in the windows of the parsonage. Night passes.

MonSTER (V.O.)

Nothing the parson did helped. No
prayer, no cure from the more
modern doctors, nothing made them
better. There was no choice but to
approach the Apothecary.

The Parson steps sadly out onto his doorstep.

85 EXT. second TALE apothecary's hovel - night - CONTINUOUS 85

The Parson is on his knees before the Apothecary, in front of the Apothecary's hovel.

MONSTER (v.o.)
 "Will you not help my daughters?"
 the Parson begged. "Will you not
 save two innocent girls?"

The Apothecary stands over the Parson haughtily.

MONSTER (V.O.)
 "Why should I?" said the
 Apothecary. "You have driven away
 my business with your preachings,
 and you have refused me the yew
 tree, my best source of healing."

The Apothecary walks away. The Parson chases him.

MONSTER (V.O.)
 "You may have the yew tree," said
 the Parson. "I will preach sermons
 in your favour. I will do anything
 if you would only save my
 daughters."

The Apothecary stops, surprised.

MONSTER (V.O.)
 "You would give up everything you
 believed in?" said the Apothecary.
 "If it would save them," said the
 Parson, "I would give up
 everything."

The Apothecary turns and enters his house.

MONSTER (v.o.)
 "Then there is nothing I can do to
 help you," said the Apothecary.

The Apothecary's door closes on the Parson.

CONOR (v.o.)
 (shocked)
 What?

We pull back from the Apothecary's hovel to...

86

EXT. second TALE HILLTOP (TBC YARD) - day - CONTINUOUS

86

...the parsonage, where the Parson and his wife stand over two new graves.

MONSTER (v.o.)

The very next day, both of the parson's daughters died.

CONOR (V.O.)

WHAT?

MONSTER (V.O.)

And that night, I came walking.

87 EXT. second tale hilltop fringe (STUDIO) - night - continu~~ed~~^{ed}
 Conor and the Monster still watching the tale.

CONOR
 Good! He deserves all the
 punishment he gets!

MONSTER
 Indeed. It was shortly after
 midnight that I tore the Parson's
 home from its very foundations.

The Monster shockingly STEPS INTO THE TALE, becoming sytlized
 along with it. Conor watches him walk down the path to the
 Parson's house.

CONOR
 (shocked)
 The Parson?!

The Monster starts destroying the parsonage, tearing off its
 roof and flinging it down the hill, sending the PARSON and
 HIS WIFE fleeing in terror.

Conor is outraged.

ConoR (CONT'D)
 What are you doing?

The Monster knocks down a wall.

MONSTER
 When times were easy, the Parson
 nearly destroyed the Apothecary
 with his belifs. But when his
 daughters were sick, he was willing
 to sacrifice every belief to save
 them.

CONOR
 So? So would everybody! What did
 you expect him to do?

MONSTER
 I would have expected him to give
 the Apothecary the yew tree when he
 first asked.

ConOR
 (surprised)
 You'd have let yourself be killed?

The Monster destroys another bit of the parsonage.

MONSTER
 It would have saved many lives,
 including the Parson's daughters.

Conor
But the Apothecary was evil!

MONSTER
He was greedy and rude, but he was still a healer. The Parson? What was he? A man who thought he believed, but was actually too weak to hold on to anything worth believing in.

The Monster topples a chimney.

MONSTER (CONT'D)
Belief is half of all healing. Belief in the cure, belief in the future that awaits.
(to Conor)
Your belief is valuable, so you must be careful where you put it. And in whom.

Beat, as the Monster gets a mischievous look.

MONSTER (CONT'D)
Tell me, Conor O'Malley. What shall I destroy next?

ConOR
(beat, bewildered)
What?

The Monster kicks down a wall.

MONSTER
It is most satisfying, I assure you. Come on! Tell me!

Conor hesitates, still unsure.

MONSTER (CONT'D)
What should I destroy? I await your command.

Conor hesitates again.

ConOR
(confused)
Snap the chimney!

MONSTER
The chimney!

The Monster unhesitatingly knocks over what remains of the fireplace. Conor steps closer. That felt interesting.

MONSTER (CONT'D)
Next!

ConOR
Throw away their beds.

MoNSTER
The beds!

The Monster reaches into the house and flings the beds nearly to the horizon. Conor begins to feel liberated.

CONOR
Smash their furniture!

The Monster stomps on the parsonage's furniture.

CONOR (CONT'D)
Break their windows!

The Monster doesn't, but steps back and gestures to the window as if in invitation.

MoNSTER
Windows? Break them yourself, come on!

Conor gets an excited smile and picks up a large fallen branch and RUNS DOWN THE PATH TO THE PARSONAGE, turning into a STYLIZED VERSION OF HIMSELF, joining the destruction.

We remain VERY CLOSE on Conor as he smashes one window and then another, his face blazing with excitement and fury.

MoNSTER (CONT'D)
Harder! Harder, Conor O'Malley!
Come on! That's it! That's it! Yes!
Hard as steel, Conor O'Malley!
Feels good, doesn't it? Again!

But the lights are slowly changing, darkening as he continues smashing, the landscape and Conor becoming less stylized.

Until he takes one last ferocious swing, flinging the branch away with a cry, spinning around...

...he's back in his Grandma's sitting room.

Where he's destroyed nearly everything. The settee is in pieces, the side tables broken, the glass display cabinets shattered, papers strewn from the bookcase.

Worst is the CLOCK. Knocked over and broken into pieces almost beyond recognition.

Conor is ankle-deep in rubble.

ConOR

Oh, no. No, no, no.

And then, almost before he can compute it, there's worse: his Grandma's car pulls up outside.

He freezes. The lights from her car shine behind the sitting room curtains, then turn off. He hears her door open.

There's nowhere for him to run, not a single thing he can do except follow the sound of her coming up the front steps, turning her key in the lock, coming in through the front door, down the hallway and-

She enters her sitting room. Before she registers anything, her unguarded face is serious and worried.

But then she looks up.

GRANDMA

What-

She looks slowly around the room, her face in ever-growing horror, her mouth open. She leans down and picks up a piece of her beloved clock.

We wait for the apocalypse. But then her face changes. She puts a palm over her mouth as if to try and stop sound from coming out. Then she slaps a second hand over it.

But she can't help it. A horrible, anguished keening escapes from her. And again. This is much worse than her being angry.

CONOR

(wary)

Grandma?

Grandma takes her hands away from her mouth and she screams. It's wordless and furious. She screams again, stepping into the sitting room. Conor thinks she might go to attack him and surprisingly, puts up his fists, ready to fight-

But she heads for the one last remaining display cabinet, puts her hands behind it and takes one, two, three pushes to send it crashing to the ground.

She leans forward, gasping, ragged, her face broken with anguish.

Then she leaves the sitting room without another word.

Conor stands there, beyond shocked.

89-89A Int. grandma's DRIVEWAY/upstairs - moments LATER

89-89A

Conor slowly approaches his Grandma's loft (the locked one). The light is on underneath the door. He can hear her in there, weeping. He stays outside, not knowing what to do.

90

InT. grandma's guest room - the next morning

90

Conor lies awake in bed. It's the morning after. It looks like he hasn't slept. He hears footsteps around the house, then the front door slamming. He gets up.

91 InT. grandma's stairwell - moments LATER

91

Conor comes slowly down the stairway, but the house seems to be empty. He glances in the sitting room. Someone has made a futile effort to clean it a bit. He heads into:

Where to his astonishment, Dad is cooking breakfast.

Dad
I know you like 'em scrambled.

ConOR
What are you doing here?

DAD
What do you think?

He motions for Conor to sit at the table, then dishes up two plates, sets one in front of Conor and sits down himself. They eat in silence, Conor just playing at his food.

Dad (CONT'D)
That was quite a mess you made.

Conor says nothing.

DAD (CONT'D)
She called me this morning. Very, very early.
(beat, it's not what we expect)
Your mum's taken a turn, Conor.
Your Grandma's gone to hospital.

Conor looks up.

DAD (CONT'D)
We agreed I would drop you off at school-

ConOR
School!?! I want to see mum!

DAD
It's no place for a kid right now, Conor. We'll see how the day goes and maybe we can visit for a little while this afternoon.

Conor looks down at his breakfast, no longer hungry.

DaD (CONT'D)
Hey, remember what I said about you being brave? Well, now's the time you have to do it, Con.
(nods to sitting room, thoughtful)
I can see how upset you are.

ConOR
I didn't mean to. I don't know what happened.

DAD
Worse things happen at sea.

ConOR
What do you mean? Aren't you going
to punish me?

DaD
(sighing)
What could possibly be the point of
that, Con?

Conor looks surprised, perhaps even displeased. Dad watches
him look distraught.

Dad (CONT'D)
You know what? Maybe you don't have
to go to school today.

93

EXT. football pitch (AMUSEMENT PARK) - day - later

93

Conor and his Dad kick a football around, serious at first, but then Conor starts to lighten up at his father's teasing. They laugh at their mistakes, cheer good moves. It's a montage of joy, a glimpse of the boy Conor actually is. Dad is quite boyish, too. Dad scores a goal and celebrates like a kid, hands over head, while Conor laughs.

Dad watches this closely, like he's just realized that the boy smiling before him is his son.

94 EXT. carpark (AMUSEMENT PARK) - day - later

94

Conor sits in his Dad's car while Dad is on a mobile phone outside. We can't hear Dad, but he doesn't look very happy. He hangs up, frustrated, gets back in the car.

ConoR

Is mum okay?

DaD

(blinks)

That was your stepmom back in LA.
And yeah, everything's fine. Now,
we've got some cleaning up to do.

Conor doesn't believe him as they pull away.

95

INT. GRANDMA'S SITTING ROOM - LATER

95

Conor and Dad put broken things into bin liners.

Dad
(amazed)
Gotta say, Champ, this is really
just amazingly thorough.

Conor doesn't answer, just puts more trash in a bin liner. He sees something, picks it up. It's the torn image of his nightmare drawing. He's mesmerised by it.

Dad (o.S.) (CONT'D)
Ooh, buried treasure.

Conor turns to his father. He's holding some old homemade DVDs. He reads through the labels.

DAD (CONT'D)
It's all those old home movies your
mum used to send to me of you when
I moved away. Guess your grandma
got copies, too.

He carefully sets them on the mantelpiece.

ConOR
(shy)
Why did you move away?

Dad sighs.

DAD
You have no idea how young we were,
Con. We had all these dreams, big,
foolish ones that your grandma
didn't approve of. And then... we
changed.

CONOR
(beat, taking the blame)
Because mum got pregnant with me.

DAD
(comforting)
Hey, hey, hey. You were only ever
good news. Your mum never regretted
having you. I know that for a fact.
(rueful smile)
Because she's always saying how
much she regretted marrying me.

CONOR
Why did she marry you then?

DAD

My devilish good looks. No, we had a lot in common. Our lives, our future. Your mum was amazing. Still is.

(sighing)

But we grew apart. Your Grandma was kind of supporting us then and insisting we be more practical and I... I was maybe less amazing than I should have been. We were just so young. Too young.

CONOR

You didn't get happily ever after.

DAD

That's life, though. Most of us just get messily ever after.

Dad sees Conor's torn drawing and picks it up, impressed.

Dad (CONT'D)

Even I'm happy you take after her.

(beat)

Shall we go see how things are at the hospital?

96-96A EXT./INT. hospital corridor - later

96-96A

Conor sits in the waiting area outside his Mum's hospital room. GRANDMA sits in a chair, pointedly away from Conor, not looking at him. He doesn't approach her.

The hospital room DOOR opens and a LAWYER steps out, putting away some papers that Conor's parents have clearly just signed. DAD sees the Lawyer out the door, holds up a "one second" finger to Conor. Closes the door.

Grandma stands as the Lawyer approaches. They clearly have business together. Conor watches them go. Then he hears voices arguing within the hospital room.

MUM (O.S.)
(muffled)
Bad show, Callum. Again.

DAD (O.S.)
(muffled)
You're changing the argument,
Lizzie-

His curiosity getting the best of him, Conor rises, pushes the door open and...

97-97A InT. hosPITAL ROOM DOOR/ HOSPITAL ROOM - contINUOUS 97-97A

...they see Conor and stop, looking at him guiltily.

MuM

Hey there.

The room is filled with get-well cards and flowers. The anger on his Mum's face is quickly hidden behind an exhausted smile. She's clearly much sicker and weaker. Her voice is heavier, as with a chest infection.

Conor pauses before entering, suspicious. He holds out the coffee to his Dad, who takes it.

ConoR

Why is everyone yelling?

Mum gives Dad a look like "you tell him".

DAD

I've got some bad news, Con. I have to fly back tomorrow.

CONOR

The day after tomorrow? Why?

Dad

Remember when your step-mum called? The baby's sick. Probably nothing serious, but Stephanie went a bit crazy and took her to hospital...

He falters.

CONOR

Are you coming back?

DAD

(firmly)

Yes. Yes, I am. Sunday after next, so not even two weeks.

(beat)

Your grandma's paying for the ticket. Which is... fun.

Mum laughs, despite herself. She makes eyes for Dad to leave.

DaD (CONT'D)

I'm going to see about finding some food. You want anything, sport?

ConOR

I want you to stop calling me "sport".

Dad laughs. Mum laughs, too, then coughs. It sounds ugly. Dad makes his exit to let them talk.

Mum pats the bed for him to sit. Conor does. She ruffles his hair. He notices the tubes and bruises on her arm.

Mum

I know. Not my favourite way to spend a day either.

ConOR

Are you okay? What happened this morning?

Mum

I had a bit of a bad reaction, sweetheart. Not what they were hoping for.

Here it is. Here's the bad news. But once again-

MUM (CONT'D)

(forced brightness)

But there's one more thing they're going to try, a medicine that's had some good results.

ConOR

Why didn't they try it before?

Mum

Well, this is something you take when the normal stuff hasn't worked the way they want it to.

CONOR

(carefully)

Does that mean it's too late?

MUM

(quickly, firmly)

No, Conor. Don't think that. It's not too late. It's never too late.

CONOR

Are you sure?

MUM

(smiling)

I believe every word I say.

CONOR

(to himself)

"Belief is half of healing."

MUM

(surprised)

Well, yeah, I suppose it is.

Beat, as perhaps something important's been left unsaid. Mum plays with his hair again.

Mum (CONT'D)
Oh, and here's something. You know
that tree behind our house I'm
always prattling on about?

Conor freezes, comically. Mum coughs, again ugly, leans back
on the bed.

MUM (CONT'D)
Well, if you can believe it, this
drug is actually made from trees
like that.

ConOR
It is?

MuM
Yeah, I know. All this time, we
could have just chopped the damn
thing down.
(laughs)
Well, not that one. That one's
almost like a friend.

Conor's face shows a growing revelation. Could this be the
reason? Is it too much to hope for? He looks up at the room
clock. It's 4.15. Clockface morphs into...

98 InT. grANDMA'S guest ROOM - that night

98

...another, smaller clock on the wall of Grandma's guest room. Conor watches it with enormous IMPATIENCE. It ticks through 12.06 and 45 seconds. 12.06 and 55 seconds.

ConoR
Come on, come on.

Click, 12.07. Conor THROWS back the blankets and RUNS out of bed.

99-100 Ext. grandMA'S BACK GARDEN - seconds later

99-100

Conor RUNS out into his Grandma's back garden.

ConOR
(demanding)
Where are you?

MonSTER (O.S.)
I am here.

With a breeze tousling Conor's hair, the Monster steps from the darkness over his Grandma's office in one easy motion. He stands above Conor, huge as ever.

ConOR
So can you do it? Can you make her better?

The Monster sighs and in what we can see is an extraordinary action, SITS DOWN, all its weight on the roof of Grandma's office. The wood moans. Conor winces, but it holds.

MonSTER
It is not up to me.

CONOR
Why not? You said the yew tree was a tree of healing.

MONSTER
It is. If your mother can be healed, the yew tree will do it.

CONOR
Is that a yes?

MonSTER
You still don't know why you called me. It's not as if I do this every day, Conor O'Malley.

CONOR
I didn't call you. And even if I did, it was obviously for my mum.

MONSTER
Was it?

CONOR
Why else? To listen to idiotic stories that make no sense?

MONSTER
It is not time yet for the Third Tale. But soon.
(MORE)

MONSTER (CONT'D)

And after that, you will tell me your story, Conor O'Malley. You will tell me your truth.

CONOR

For God's sake, not this again-

The Monster leans suddenly forward.

MONSTER

You know of what I speak.

Conor looks up as the SOUNDS FROM HIS NIGHTMARE start. The camera spins around him as the scene melts away. The walls of the garden grow blacker, the sounds of screaming start to rise, dust and debris flying around him.

ConOR

No! No, not this!

The wind rising. The distant SCREAMING is heard ("Conor!")-

ConOR (CONT'D)

No! Please!

The garden is suddenly as it was before. Conor is shaken.

ConOR (CONT'D)

That's not my truth. That's just a nightmare.

MonSTER

Nevertheless, this is what will happen after the third tale.

The Monster stands. Grandma's office groans in relief.

CONOR

I want to know what's going to happen with my mum.

MONSTER

Do you not know already?

The Monster steps back over Grandma's office. It's leaving.

CONOR

Wait!

MONSTER

You waste the precious time that is given you!

CONOR

If you're a tree of healing, then I need you to heal!

MONSTER

And so I shall.

A huge MURMURATION OF STARLINGS appears over the horizon and surround the Monster. With a last look, the Monster LEAKS AWAY into them, flying away.

Conor holds up his hands to block the flutter of wings, then all is quiet.

101-101A Int. grandma's stairway/ TV ROOM - moments later 101-101A

Conor has re-entered the house to go back to bed. He pauses on the stairway because he HEARS A TV ON - and what might be his own voice on it.

Outside his Grandma's TV room, the TV noises are louder, including his own muffled voice and his mum's. He puts his ear against the wood to try and hear. He thinks about going in, but is too afraid to disturb Grandma.

102 InT. grandma's car/GRANDMA'S STREET - morning

102

Door slamming as Conor gets in his Grandma's car to be driven to school. He's looking at his mum's HALF-FINISHED DRAWING OF THE HILLTOP that she left in his sketchpad. Grandma notices it, too. Car doesn't move. Conor looks up.

ConOR

Grandma?

GrANDMA

(coming out of a fog)

What? Oh, yes.

(beat)

Where were we going again?

CONOR

To school.

GRANDMA

Yes, that's right.

She puts the car in gear. They pull out in silence.

CONOR

Grandma? Your seatbelt?

She absentmindedly buckles it. Conor is concerned.

102A Int. Grandma's sitting room / kitchen - DAY

102A

From the kitchen, Conor observes his grandma in the sitting room as she wonders amid the destruction.

103 EXT. school ENTRANCE /GRANDMA'S YARD - moments LATER 103

Grandma drops Conor off. He walks away, watching her go with a concerned, confused look.

104 InT. physical social and education class - later 104

Conor sits at his desk, ignoring the lesson again, disturbed about his Grandma. He sees HARRY studying him. They exchange a look, but no words. He ignores LILY.

105-105AINT./EXT. grandMA'S GUESTROOM/ BACK GARDEN - niGHT 105-105A

Conor sits in the dark in a lawn chair, wrapped in a blanket. He checks the clock on his phone. It switches from 12.07 to 12.08. No monster.

Suddenly, a LIGHT comes on from the house, REFLECTING on the back garden. Conor turns and looks up. His Grandma is in the locked room.

106 InT. grandma's CORRIDOR/ UPSTAIRS - night

106

Conor waits down the hallway, "spying" on his Grandma, watching the light come out of the loft room. He hides behind a corner of his bedroom door. His Grandma leaves the room, her arms full of papers. Conor ducks into the darkness of his room as she passes.

A paper drifts down to the floor as she does. Looking out from the crack of his dark bedroom door, he can see that it's a DRAWING OF HIS OWN.

What's she doing with that? He makes to reach out and take it, but Grandma is there first, picking it up and walking to the TV ROOM with it. She shuts this door behind her.

106A Conor watches her, confused. Conor goes to the TV ROOM DOOR
again and listens, hearing his own voice again.

This time he OPENS THE DOOR QUIETLY.

107 int. grandma's tv ROOM - moments Later

107

Conor stops by the open door of the TV room. His Grandma, her back to him, is watching TV. We can see the PILE OF HOMEMADE DVDs his father found sitting next to the television. One is open.

107A Ext. Amusement park / roller coaster - day

107A

Onscreen, Conor is astonished to see himself, filming him and his MUM, LOOKING HEALTHY AND VIBRANT getting into a ROLLER COASTER car. They giggle, up to something. The seat restraints close.

Mum (on VIDEO)
(Shh, here they come.)

Onscreen - The image disappears as Conor hides his phone. We hear their seats being checked by an attendant. Conor raises the phone again. They look around to make sure they won't get caught, smiling like fiends.

MUM (ON VIDEO) (CONT'D)
(If you drop that, it'll leave a permanent mark across your face.)

CONOR (on VIDEO)
(Nah, it'll probably hit you first.)

Onscreen - Mum slaps his arm playfully

In the doorway, Conor watches, transfixed, as does his Grandma, still unaware of his presence.

Onscreen - They both laugh in surprise as the car lurches forward and starts up a steep incline.

Mum (on VIDEO)
(You know what I'm thinking?)

Conor (on VIDEO)
(What?)

MUM (on VIDEO)
(We shouldn't have had all that Indian food for lunch.)

On the chair, Grandma gives a snort of private laughter.

Onscreen - Conor makes a fake vomiting sound. His mum makes one, too, until it becomes a competition and dissolves into laughter. Then they're nearly at the top.

Mum (on VIDEO) (CONT'D)
(Ready? Here we go.)

ConOR (on VIDEO)
(Here we go.)

Onscreen - They look into the camera. At the last second, Mum grabs Conor's arm lovingly, then they plunge over the top.

The scene seems to end, but there's a weird splice on the DVD that surprises Conor but not Grandma, she's seen this before. It cuts to an even older video.

107B Int. Conor's sitting room (kitchen) - day

107B

Onscreen - we cut in mid-scene. MUM'S HAND is making a big scribble on a big piece of paper, overlapping itself with lots of empty spaces. She turns the camera to a MUCH YOUNGER CONOR, 5 or 6 YEARS OLD. He holds a coloured pencil.

In the room, Conor is surprised.

Mum (o.S.)(on video)
(Okay, remember? Just look hard.
Colour in what you see.)

Onscreen, LITTLE CONOR approaches the drawing with his pencil, looking at the scribble.

YOUNG ConoR (on VIDEO)
(I see a gremlin.)

Mum (On VIDEO)
(Well, go ahead, draw it in.)

In the room, Grandma is rapt, moved.

Onscreen - Little Conor looks back at his mum, unsure.

MUM (o.S.) (on video) (CONT'D)
(Like this.)

Onscreen - Mum sets down the camera so it stays filming them. A YOUNGER, HEALTHIER MUM goes to a smaller part of the scribble and colours in shapes that make a LITTLE MOUSE WITH WHISKERS. She turns to Conor. With a firm expression, he starts to colour in squares.

In the room, Conor watches closely, as rapt as Grandma.

Onscreen - There's a clumsy edit and Mum is filming again on a picture of a GREMLIN. The eyes have a reflection in them.

MUM (on VIDEO) (CONT'D)
(That's really good, Conor.
Especially the eyes.)
(points to eyes)
(Life is in the eyes and if you can
catch that...)

In the room, Conor is stunned at these repeated words of his mother, "life is in the eyes." Grandma puts a hand over her mouth to hold in her emotion.

Onscreen - Mum turns the camera to take a selfie of her and LITTLE CONOR, on their eyes.

MUM (On VIDEO) (CONT'D)
(You'll see when we watch. You'll
see our eyes.)

Onscreen - Little Conor sticks out his tongue. Mum laughs and does, too. They laugh and she films the Gremlin again.

Mum (on VIDEO) (CONT'D)
(My wee little artist.)

The video ends frozen on the Gremlin's eyes. Conor breathes out, and his Grandma hears him. She turns to look at him.

But it's loving. Silently, they both go back to watching the frozen image of the Gremlin's eyes.

108-108AEXT/INT. grandma's DRIVEWAY/ guest room - next morning 108-108A

Conor looks out his bedroom window. See his DAD pull up.

109 Omitted

109

110 EXT. pier - DAY

110

Conor and his dad walk along an old pier under the cloudy sky.

DAD

I'll be back. I will, I promise.

Conor says nothing.

Dad (CONT'D)

And you'll come for Christmas in LA! That'll be fun-

ConOR

I don't want to leave Mum on her own for Christmas.

Dad stops walking. Conor looks up at him. It's almost a challenge to contradict him.

DAD

Conor-

CONOR

She's going to get better. They're giving her this new medicine and she'll come home. It's the whole reason. It has to be.

DAD

Reason for what?

CONOR

So you just go back to LA, go back to your other family-

Dad

Conor, this new medicine your mum's taking-

CONOR

It's going to make her well.

Beat, as Dad makes the important decision.

DAD

No, Conor. It probably isn't.

CONOR

Yes, it is.

DAD

It's a last ditch effort, son. She's too weak. She keeps getting infections-

CONOR

It'll heal her. I know it. I'm
telling you, it's the whole reason
it came-

DaD

Reason what came? What are you
talking about?

CONOR

(hastily, clinging
desperately to hope)
The monster! It comes every night.
It's a tree that turns into a
monster at 12.07-

dad

Conor... What?

CONOR

At first I thought it was a dream
but there's always berries and
leaves and stuff when I wake up-

dad

Conor.

CONOR

(even louder)
And I've got one story to go and
then I've got to tell my own and I
think that's when it's going to
heal her-

dad

Conor, stop this!

Conor finally stops. Looks, upset, at his father. Dad puts
hands on Conor's shoulders to talk to him, gently.

Dad (CONT'D)

I don't know what this dream is,
Conor, but that's all it is. A
dream. I'm sorry. You shouldn't
have to face this, but not every
story has a happy ending.

Conor starts at this. He knows not every story does.

DAD (CONT'D)

This is what I meant when I said
you were going to have to be brave.

Long pause.

CONOR

(like he's realising
something)
(MORE)

CONOR (CONT'D)

You've never seen a monster, have
you?

Dad stares back, concerned.

DAD

Oh, I've seen plenty.

111 EXT. grandma's driveway - morning

111

Conor's Dad hugs him goodbye.

DaD
I'll be back as soon as I can.

ConoR
What if it's not fast enough?

DAD
We'll Skype. And I'm only ever a
phone call away.

CONOR
(beat)
I hope your baby is okay.

DAD
Your half-sister. And thank you.
(beat)
Conor, listen, I-

CONOR
You don't have to.

DAD
(confused)
I don't have to what?

CONOR
(shrugs)
Just... you don't have to.

Dad has no answer. His son is giving him permission to leave him behind. He hugs Conor, but doesn't contradict him.

DAD
Back as soon as I can.

Conor makes a sad little wave at him, then turns his back to go inside.

Fade to bLACK.

Nightmare

The nightmare sounds rise again, screaming, yelling,
crescendo to-

CuT TO:

MUSIC RISES. A montage of days passing:

112-112A Int./EXT. GrandMA'S SITTING ROOM/DRIVEWAY - day 112-112A

Conor, almost angrily, packs away all the rubbish bags he and his father have collected, stuffing them into the bin outside.

113 InT. hospital room - day

113

Conor sits in a corner chair while, out of focus, FRIENDS OF HIS MUM visit her. Lily's mum is one of them, and she's there, too. Conor ignores her, playing on his phone instead.

114 InT. SHOP ROAD - DAY

114

Conor stops by the shop window again, but the case of coloured pencils has been replaced by something else. He sighs and walks on.

115

InT. physICAL SOCIAL AND EDUCATION CLASS - dAY

115

Conor sits at his desk, drawing on his SKETCHPAD and ignoring the lesson. Ms. Kwan lectures about BULLYING on the Powerpoint (along with, ironically, a sign that reads "This school operates a zero-tolerance anti-bullying policy"). Classmates' hands (including Lily, next to Conor) are in the air.

Ms. Kwan walks by Conor's desk. She and Conor exchange a look, and we see Ms.Kwan decide to let Conor keep drawing.

Conor's become untouchable. Which is worse than ever. Harry catches his eye. Conor looks away.

116 InT. hoSPITAL ROOM - daY

116

Conor is at the door to the room. His Mum, helped by a FEMALE NURSE, is in distress. Fear in her eyes, his Mum gestures angrily for Grandma to get Conor out of the room. Grandma does. She's stern, though, not spiteful.

117 Omitted

117

118 EXT. grandMA'S driveWAY - momENTS LATER

118

Conor drags the wheelie bin to the curb among several plastic bags waiting to be pick up by the dustmen.

119 InT. grandMA'S SITTING ROOM - DAY

119

Conor in the middle of the now-empty sitting room. It seems
MUCH bigger.

120 InT. school BLUE HALLWAY - dAY

120

Conor walks against the flow of students, alone. They leave an area around him, as if they can't see him at all.

121 InT. phySICAL SOCIAL AND EDUCATION CLASS - lateR 121

Conor sits at his desk again. We finally sees what he's drawn. It's a FLIP-ANIMATION on the corner of his textbook. He flips the pages to animate it: It's a drawing of him falling into a huge black hole.

MUSIC FINISHES

122

INT. scHOOl CAFETERIA - DAY

122

Conor sits alone, not eating the food in front of him, withdrawn into himself. In the background, we might notice that the digital clock reads 12.04.

SLAP! From across the table, two hands smash down on either side of his tray, knocking his orange juice into his lap.

Conor stands, lap covered in juice, and looks up into the laughing faces of Anton and Sully, either side of Harry's usual eerie stare.

Sully
O'Malley's wet himself!

Anton flicks some spilled juice onto Conor.

ANTON
You missed some!

They laugh, but then notice that Harry and Conor are doing that uncomfortable staring thing again. The laughter dies.

HARRY
I think I've finally figured you out, O'Malley. After all this time.

Harry steps forward. Conor braces himself.

HARRY (CONT'D)
Here is the very worst thing I can do to you.

SULLY
You're in for it now.

ANTON
Kick his ass.

But Harry just holds out his hand to shake. Surprised, Conor shakes it.

HarRY
Goodbye, O'Malley. I no longer see you.

He lets go of Conor's hand and turns his back to leave. After a confused beat, Anton and Sully do the same.

Conor watches them go, growing more and more upset, a breeze tousling his hair...

...as the bullies pass in front of the digital clock, it ticks over to 12.07.

ANGLE ON: Conor, as the The Monster now stands behind him, stretching up to the tall ceiling of the cafeteria. It kneels down and speaks into his ear.

MONSTER

It is time for the third tale.

Without looking back, Conor starts to walk after Harry. The Monster matches him, step for step.

MONSTER (CONT'D)

There was once an invisible man,
who had grown tired of being
unseen.

MONSTER (CONT'D)

It was not that he was actually
invisible. It was just that people
had become used to not seeing him.

ConOR

(to Harry)

Hey!

Conor quickens his step. The Monster keeps up.

Conor catches up to Harry and grabs him by the shoulder, twisting him around. Harry pretends to not see him, pretend-blaming a laughing Sully for grabbing him.

MONSTER

One day, the invisible man couldn't
stand it anymore. He kept
wondering: if no one sees you, are
you really there at all?

Conor watches the three bullies walking away again.

CONOR

(to Monster w/o turning)

What did the invisible man do?

MONSTER

He called for a monster...

Conor raises his fists. Behind him, the Monster does the same.

Conor runs after Harry, the Monster following.

ANGLE ON: Harry, Sully and Anton turn in amusement, but their faces change to fright. Are they seeing the Monster or just Conor? Sully and Anton bolt, leaving Harry.

ANGLE ON: Conor, runs at him, yelling his rage. He raises a fist. The Monster raises a fist behind him in mirror. They both swing forward.

123 INT. SCHOOL/HIGH SCHOOL DIRECTRESS'S OFFICE - Later 123

Conor flexes his fists in his lap. They're bloody and bruised. MISS KWAN is there, but we stay tight on Conor.

DIRECTRESS (O.S.)

I don't even know what to say to you, Conor. You sent him to hospital. His parents are threatening to sue.

Conor looks up, briefly.

DIRECTRESS (CONT'D)

But I explained that he'd been bullying you and that your circumstances were... special.

Conor winces at the word, looks at his battered fingers.

123A Int. School caFETERIA - day

123A

FLASH: of eyes of the cafeteria, watching Conor beat Harry.

DIRECTRESS

They backed down.

(shouting)

But that's not the point!

Conor jumps. Still doesn't look at her. We hear her sigh.

ConOR

It wasn't me.

DIRECTRESS

What was that?

Finally glances up to her, very briefly then down again.

CONOR

It wasn't me. It was the Monster.

123B Int. SchooL CAFETERIA - DAY

123B

FLASH: Conor beating Harry, the Monster echoing his actions behind him.

DIRECTRESS

The Monster.

(leaning forward)

Conor, an entire dining hall saw you hitting him. Saw you beating him very badly.

(beat)

Heard you yelling about not being invisible.

Conor winces again and looks down at his fists.

123C Int. scHOOl CAFETERIA - DAY

123C

FLASH: Conor yelling "I am NOT invisible! I'm NOT!" as he hits Harry.

DIRECTRESS

I understand how angry you must be.
I mean, I haven't even been able to
track down a parent or guardian for
you.

ConOR

My dad's gone back to America. My
Grandma turns her phone on silent
so it won't wake up my Mum.

Miss Kwan sits back. It's an impossible situation.

DIRECTRESS

If you want to be seen, Conor, this
is not the way. School rules
dictate immediate exclusion.

Conor shuts his eyes in anticipation. Here it comes. We sense that, in fact, he wants it.

DIRECTRESS (CONT'D)

But how could I do that-

Conor opens his eyes, surprised.

DIRECTRESS (CONT'D)

-and call myself any kind of
teacher?

He looks up at her in disbelief and crushing disappointment.

DIRECTRESS (CONT'D)

Go back to class. We will talk
about this one day, Conor. But not
today.

ConOR

You're not punishing me?

She mirrors the words his father spoke earlier.

DIRECTRESS

What could possibly be the point?

124 INT. school corridor/ DOWNSTAIRS - moments LATER 124

Conor, shellshocked, walks back to class. He passes a STUDENT, who gives him an elaborately wide berth.

125 InT. Physical Social and Education CLASS - moments Later 125

Mr Clark is in mid-flow about EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING but everyone, including him, stops when Conor opens the door.

Conor pauses for a moment, then walks through the silence, all eyes on him, past Harry's empty desk and back to his own, next to LILY. He sits, defeated, as Mr Clark faintly continues his lesson.

A small scraping sound. Conor looks down.

CONOR'S POV - Lily's finger tentatively pushes a NOTE onto his desk.

Conor looks at her. She's face-forward to Mr Clark, but wants him to take the note. He takes it. He looks at her again. She turns to look him in the eyes.

But before he can open it, the classroom door opens again. A SECRETARY enters with a note. Conor and Lily watch as she crosses to Mr Clark and they read it together.

They both look up, right at Conor.

126 InT. hosPITAL CORRIDOR FIRST FLOOR - day

126

Conor's Grandma leads him to his Mum's hospital room. He makes to enter, but stops when she doesn't follow him in.

ConOR
Aren't you coming?

Grandma struggles with herself, knowing what awaits him. She finally just puts her hands on his shoulders and squeezes them brusquely. Her version of a hug.

GraNDMA
I'll be... I'll be around. Okay?

She nods, still struggling with herself. Then abruptly walks away. Conor watches her go. Then opens the door.

127

InT. hoSPITAL ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

127

Mum's bed is in the sitting position. She looks very bad, breathing tube in her nose, but she smiles when she sees him. She holds up a long, straight-haired, yet purple wig.

MUM

(voice thin)

I suppose even drag queens get old.

But Conor doesn't laugh. He realises fully what's about to happen.

Mum pats the mattress like before. But Conor pointedly sits in the chair by her bed instead. She nods that this is okay, too. He stares at the floor.

Mum (CONT'D)

What did you do to your hands?

ConOR

(surprisingly angry)

This is the talk, isn't it?
Everybody always wants to have a
talk lately.

Mum readies herself, smiles again.

MUM

I wanted to see you. And you know
how the morphine sends me off to
Cloud Cuckoo Land sometimes-

ConOR

Why did Grandma get me out of
school?

Mum

Look at me, son.

He refuses at first, but finally does, arms crossed tight against himself. Here it is. There's no going back.

Mum (CONT'D)

I spoke to the doctor this morning.
The new treatment isn't working,
sweetheart.

ConOR

The one from the yew tree?

MUM

Yes.

ConOR

How can it not be working?

Beat, as Mum swallows, tries to smile for him.

MUM

Things have just moved really fast.
Faster than they thought.

CONOR

(as if to himself)
But how can it not be working?

MUM

I know. I had big hopes for our own
personal yew tree.

ConOR

But it didn't help.

Mum shakes her head slightly.

ConOR (CONT'D)

So what happens now? What's the
next treatment?

Mum doesn't answer. Which is an answer in itself. Conor looks
back at the floor and says the final thing out loud.

ConOR (CONT'D)

There aren't any more treatments.

MUM

(quietly crying now)
I'm sorry, son. I've never been
more sorry about anything in my
life.

ConoR

You said it would work. You
believed it would work.

MUM

I know.

ConOR

You lied. You've been lying this
whole time.

MUM

I think, maybe, deep in your heart,
you've always known, though.
Haven't you?

She reaches for him, but he won't take her hand.

Mum (CONT'D)

It's okay that you're angry,
sweetheart. It really, really is.
(rueful laugh)
I'm pretty angry, too, to tell you
the truth. But Conor? Are you
listening, Conor?

Conor, still looking away, eventually nods.

MUM (CONT'D)

One day, if you look back and you feel bad for being so angry that you couldn't even speak to me, then you have to know that it was okay. That I knew. I know everything you need to tell me without you having to say it out loud.

Conor still can't look at her. She starts crying harder, but pushes through it.

MUM (CONT'D)

And honestly, son, you be as angry as you need to be. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Not your father, not your grandma, no one. And if you need to break things, then by God, you break them good and hard. And I'll be right there. You might not see me, but I'll be right there, breaking 'em right along with you.

Conor can hardly bear it.

MUM (CONT'D)

I need to know that you heard me, sweetheart. I need to know, okay? Okay?

Without looking at her, Conor finally nods his agreement. The final acknowledgement that she's going to die.

Mum breathes out in exhausted relief.

Mum (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. I'm going to have to take some more painkillers.

Obviously in pain, she presses the morphine button. She reaches for Conor again. After a beat he finally takes her hand.

MUM (CONT'D)

(quietly weeping)

I wish I had a hundred years. A hundred years I could give to you.

Conor holds his mother's hand and looks at the floor, as she drifts to drug-induced sleep. There's nothing more to say.

128 InT. hoSPITAL ROOM - later

128

Conor's Mum is asleep. The light outside has grown dimmer. Conor sits, alone, in the chair, hunched down low. Grandma enters, a worried look on her face. How did it go?

Conor looks up at her, his eyes red, with grief, with rage.

ConOR
I want to go home.

GrANDMA
Conor-

ConOR
My home. The one with the yew tree.

GrANDMA
(not unkind)
Conor, no, not tonight. You're
going to want to be here.

Conor understands what she means as Grandma sits on the other side of the bed, taking her daughter's hand. Conor stands.

CONOR
I'm going to get something to eat.

Grandma nods and Conor leaves...

129 InT. hoSPITAL CORRIDOR - conTINUOUS

129

...but as we follow him out of the room, he starts walking
down the corridor, then faster, then faster, until he's
finally RUNNING AS FAST AS HE CAN-

130 EXT. hospital entrance CONTINUOUS
 ...OUT OF THE HOSPITAL.

130

131-131AEXT. PAVEMENT/ LONG PAVEMENT - CONTINUOUS

131-131A

Conor keeps on running.

132 EXT. conor's house driveway - momentS LATER

132

Evening is coming on. Conor, still running, approaches his own house. Out of breath, tired, but still going, we follow him in one continuous shot as he opens his front door and goes into...

132A InT. conOR'S HOUSE FRONT HALLWAY - conTINUOUS

132A

...where he doesn't even shut the door behind him and
continues through...

132B Omitted

132B

132C InT. conOR'S KITCHEN - conTINUOUS

132C

...increasing his pace, he goes to the back door and heads
out into...

132D EXT. conOR'S BACK GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

132D

...running now, across the garden, where we can see the hilltop and yew tree ahead of him. He goes through the back gate, it opens with a groan of metal, and Conor...

132E EXT. Train Tracks (FX ZONE) - CONTINUOUS

132E

...crosses the train tracks...

132F EXT. HILL GATES - CONTINUOUS

132F

...to a torn opening in the fence on the other side. He ducks under it and we follow him...

132G EXT. CHURCHYARD hiLLTOP - CONTINUOUS

132G

...into the graveyard that stretches down the hill. The yew tree is up top, but still just a tree. Conor runs furiously now...

Up the hill, dodging through the tombstones...

The tree getting closer and closer...

ConOR

WAKE UP!

Still in the continuous shot, he reaches the tree and starts pounding and kicking it.

ConOR (CONT'D)

I said, WAKE UP! I don't care what time it is! WAKE UP!

Kicks it again. And again.

And the tree steps out of the way, causing Conor to fall. We pull up higher and higher, in the Monster's POV, seeing Conor on the ground. Continuous shot ends.

MONSTER

You will do yourself harm if you keep that up.

Conor gets angrily to his feet. It's nearly night now.

CONOR

It didn't work! You said the yew tree would make her better, but it didn't!

MONSTER

I said if she could be healed, the yew tree would do it. It seems she could not.

Conor attacks the monster again, pounding it with his fists. He pulls off one of the Monster's small branches.

CONOR

Fix her! Make her better!

MoNSTER

Ow!
Conor-

CONOR

(still attacking)
What's the use of you if you can't? Just stupid stories and getting me into trouble and everyone treat me like I've got a disease-

The Monster kneels down, hands on either side of Conor.

MONSTER

You were the one who called me,
Conor O'Malley. You were the one
with the answers to these
questions.

CONOR

If I called you, it was to save
her! It was to heal her!

MONSTER

I did not come to heal her. I came
to heal you.

Beat, as Conor takes in the impact of this.

CONOR

Me? I don't need... My mum's the
one who...

But the weight of the Monster's words are too much.

ConOR (CONT'D)

Ahhhhhh!
(quietly)
Help me.

Beat, as the Monster takes in a breath.

MonSTER

It is time... for the fourth tale.

Conor's eyes widen in horror, but before he can speak, the
world has changed:

133

Ext. the fourth tale nightmare - AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS 133

Conor and the Monster are on a dark, barren stretch of ground. An evil place, in the blackest night. The sounds from Conor's nightmare rise again - the blowing wind, the faint rumblings.

The Monster stands over Conor, but is dangerous-looking and sinister, the branches from its body are unraveling beyond it in gnarls, its eyes changed to a merciless blankness.

ConOR

No! Please! Get me out of here!

MonSTER

(scarier than ever)

There will be no more delays. It is time for you to tell the fourth tale.

CONOR

I don't know any tales! I have to get back to my Mum!

The Monster looks past Conor.

MONSTER

But she is already here.

Conor turns to look. Far across the clearing stands his mother. She is frail and thin, but not bald, dressed in flowing white cloth. She turns and smiles at him, but so vulnerable. She's been the figure in the nightmare all along.

CONOR

No! Mum! Get out of here!

Mum

I'm fine, darling. There's nothing to worry about.

CONOR

Mum, run! Please, run!

Mum

But there's nothing to worry!

But there's a terrible sound, a distant ROARING, as of something impossibly big.

Mum (CONT'D)

(troubled)

Conor?

OVERHEAD SHOT - high above, we see Conor and the Monster, distant from Mum.

Behind her, in a large circle she stands on the edge of, the GROUND BEGINS TO COLLAPSE AWAY, almost like a whirlpool, whipping everything into it, along with blackness and dust.

ConOR

Mum! MUM!

He starts to run for her. The ground continues to collapse around her until-

Mum

Conor!

It collapses right BELOW HER, dropping her into the gaping, swirling hole. She grabs on to the edge-

But can't hold on-

Until Conor reaches her, grabbing onto her, holding her there.

Here it is. Conor's WORST NIGHTMARE. The thing he is most afraid of in the world. The winds shrieking and howling around them, swirling into the hole.

CONOR

NO MUM!!

The nightmare is in full flow. The screaming, the roaring, the wind, all because he's holding on to his mother, trying to prevent her from falling.

Mum

Don't let go, Conor! Don't let me go!

ConOR

(struggling)

I won't! I promise.

The wind grows worse; the whirlpool effect starts to pull cars and telephone poles into the hole.

Conor's Mum starts to slip from Conor's grasp.

ConOR (CONT'D)

No!

Conor turns to our original Monster, still not moving.

CONOR (CONT'D)

Help me! I can't hold on to her!

MuM

Conor! I'm slipping!

CONOR

NO MUM!

But it's getting too much. She's too heavy. The Monster approaches, unraveled and huge and terrifying.

MONSTER
Here is the fourth tale.

ConOR
Shut up! Help me!

MONSTER
Here is the truth of Conor
O'Malley.

Conor's Mum is screaming, slipping.

CONOR
No! Help me!

She's pulling away from his hands, from his fingers. He's trying, trying-

Mum
Conor!

ConOR
NO! Mum-

But she falls.

The hole takes her and she falls, falls, falls away, her white dress a light in the darkness. Conor watches her fall-

He turns back to the Monster anguished, the swirling darkness behind him. THIS IS THE IMAGE HE DREW ON HIS SKETCHPAD.

The blackness and furious winds abate, until there's only quiet.

ConOR (CONT'D)
(angry, frightened)
This is when I wake up. This is
when I always wake up.

MonSTER
The tale is not yet told.

CONOR
Get me out of here. I need to see
my mum!

MONSTER
She is no longer here, Conor. You
let her go.

CONOR
This is just a nightmare. This
isn't the truth.

The Monster leans forward, scaring Conor into falling back.

MONSTER

It is the truth. You let her go.

ConOR

She fell. I couldn't hold on to her any more.

MonSTER

You let her go.

ConOR

She fell!

The Monster leans over him, as terrifying as it's ever been.

MonSTER

You must speak the truth or you will never leave this place.

CONOR

Let me go!

MoNSTER

Speak the truth!

ConOR

What truth?! I don't know what you mean!

The Monster's face surges down close to his, punching its hands either side of Conor, causing the ground to CRACK all around him.

MONSTER

You do know.

A sudden quiet. Conor does know. He's always known.

CONOR

(quietly)
No. I can't.

MONSTER

You must.

CONOR

I can't.

There's a sudden note of kindness in the Monster's voice.

MONSTER

You can. You let her go!

Conor begins to cry.

CONOR
 (shaking his head)
 Please-

MONSTER
 You let her go, Conor O'Malley.
 Didn't you?

Conor squeezes his eyes shut tight.

MONSTER (CONT'D)
 You could have held on for longer,
 but you let the nightmare take her.
 Didn't you?

ConOR
 No.

MONSTER
 YES! You allowed her to fall.

CONOR
 No!

MONSTER
 You must tell me the fourth tale,
 Conor O'Malley. You must!

CONOR
 It'll kill me if I do!

MONSTER
 It will kill you if you do not!

The Monster pounds the ground again, terrifying. More cracks form, until Conor's trapped on a broken shelf above the hole, teetering above it.

MONSTER (CONT'D)
 You let her go. Before it's too
 late! Tell me WHY!

Beat, as Conor struggles.

ConOR
 No-

The ground collapses more, the shelf teeters.

MONSTER
 (pleading)
 Speak the truth!

CONOR
 No.

MONSTER
 Speak the truth Conor O'Malley!

CONOR
NO!

MONSTER
SPEAK THE TRUTH!

CONOR
NOOOOO!

MONSTER
SPEAK THE TRUTH BOY!

Until, finally...

Conor can't fight it any longer...

He speaks the truth.

ConOR
I want it to be over! I can't stand
knowing that she'll go! I want it
to be finished! I let her fall! I
let her die!

He collapses to the ground. The shelf gives way beneath him,
and he falls-

Screaming into the hole-

The Monster disappearing above him-

Until-

WHOOMP! He hits something, landing on it.

It's the MONSTER'S OUTSTRETCHED HAND. It has caught him. It
lifts him gently up out of the hole and deposits him:

134

EXT. POST NIGHTMARE (HILLTOP) - SUNSET - MOMENTS LATER 134

Back on the ground on the hilltop behind his house. The Monster stands above him. Conor sits up, his face beyond sad, helpless tears coming.

ConOR

Why didn't it kill me? I deserve punishment. I deserve the worst.

MonSTER

Do you?

ConOR

I've known forever she wasn't going to make it. She said she was getting better all the time because that's what I wanted to hear. And I believed her.

(beat)

Except I didn't.

MONSTER

No.

CONOR

And I started to think how much I wanted it to be over. I couldn't stand how alone it made me feel.

MONSTER

A part of you wished it would end. Even if it meant losing her.

ConOR

(whispering)

I let her go. I could have held on, but I always let her go.

MONSTER

And that, is your truth, Conor O'Malley.

CONOR

I didn't mean it, though! And now it's for real! Now she's going to die and it's all my fault!

MONSTER

And that, is not the truth at all.

Conor gives into grief. The Monster gently takes him up in two huge hands, making a comforting bed out of them.

MONSTER (CONT'D)

You were merely wishing for an end of pain. Your own pain. It is the most human wish there is.

CONOR
I didn't mean it.

MONSTER
You did, but you also did not.

Conor looks up at the big face in front of him.

CONOR
How can both be true?

MONSTER
How can a prince be a murderer and
a saviour? How can an apothecary be
evil-tempered but right-thinking?
How can invisible men make
themselves more lonely by being
seen?

ConOR
(shrugs, exhausted)
I don't know. Your stories never
made any sense to me.

MONSTER
Because humans are complicated
beasts. You believe comforting lies
while knowing full well the painful
truths that make those lies
necessary. It is a wonder you can
survive at all.

Conor isn't sure he buys this, as much as he might want to.

MonSTER (CONT'D)
In the end, Conor, it is not
important what you think, it is
only important what you do.

Long beat as Conor considers this.

ConOR
So what do I do?

MONSTER
What you did just now. You speak
the truth.

ConOR
That's all?

MONSTER
You think it's easy? You were
willing to die rather than speak
it.

CONOR
Because what I thought was so wrong-

MONSTER

It was not wrong. It was only a thought. One among millions.

Conor takes a long breath, he's exhausted. In fact, he's fighting to keep his eyes open.

CONOR

I'm so tired. So tired of all of this.

MONSTER

Then sleep. There's time.

ConOR

Are you sure? I need to get back to my mum.

MonSTER

You will. I promise you.

Conor considers this.

ConOR

Will you be there?

MONSTER

Yes. It will be the final steps of my walking.

Conor nestles into the monster's hands.

ConOR

How does the fourth story end?

MONSTER

Shhh... Sleep...

But he hears no answer as he can no longer fight off sleep.

135

Ext. CHURCHYARD HILLTOP - NIGHT - laTER

135

Conor is asleep on the hilltop. The Monster is now just a tree, but there's still a suggestion that it's cradling him. Conor's phone buzzes in his pocket but he doesn't wake. We hear a car pull up and a door open.

GrandMA (o.S.)
(faintly)
Oh, thank God!

Conor blinks himself awake. He looks up.

GrandMA (o.S.) (CONT'D)
Conor! CONOR!

He sees his Grandma running towards him from where she's left her car (lights on, engine running, door open) by the church next to the graveyard. She's putting away her phone, obviously the one who's been calling him.

GrandMA (CONT'D)
CONOR!

He stands, bracing himself, but when she reaches him she grabs him in a hug so vigorous they almost tumble over.

She releases him and, being who she is, starts shouting.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)
Where have you BEEN? I've been out
of my MIND trying to find you!

ConOR
There was something I needed to-

But she's already dragging him towards the car.

GrandMA
No time! We have to go now!

She sprints off away from him, back to the car, and what this means sinks in for Conor. He races after her.

136 InT/ext. grandma's car/city streets TO TRAIN CROSSING - night
 - moments LATER

Grandma drives at extremely high speed, cutting corners, running red lights. It would be funny if it weren't so desperate. Conor sits in the passenger seat, shy of how much she's both crying and trying to control herself.

She turns another corner and he grabs his seatbelt. But he notices something sticking out of his pocket. LILY'S NOTE. He takes it out and unfolds a comically high number of times. It's just three lines:

--"I miss being your friend."

--"You're not invisible."

--"I see you."

The "I" is underlined a comic number of times, too. It's heart-breaking.

ConOR

Grandma-

GrandMA

Don't. Just don't.

136A They fly over a bump. Conor puts the note back in his pocket. 136A

ConOR
(quietly)
I'm sorry. About the sitting room.
And everything.

She laughs a thick, sad laugh.

GrandMA
It doesn't matter. It doesn't
matter.

ConOR
It doesn't?

GRANDMA
Of course it doesn't.

She starts to really cry, so just lets herself.

136B She turns a corner to a train crossing, the barriers firm^{136B} coming down. No way to drive around it. She stops, hitting the steering wheel in frustration.

GrandMA (CONT'D)

(beat)

You know, Conor? You and me? Not the most natural fit, are we?

ConOR

No. I guess not.

GRANDMA

I guess not either. But we're going to have to learn.

ConOR

I know.

Grandma makes a little sobbing noise.

GRANDMA

You do know, don't you? Of course you do. But you know what, grandson? We have something in common.

ConOR

We do?

GRANDMA

Oh, yes.

We hear the train horn in the distance. Grandma looks at him.

GrandMA (CONT'D)

Your mum. That's what we have in common.

Conor doesn't answer, but he knows what she means. This is their peace talk, and he agrees to it. He nods.

She reaches forward, grabs his hand, squeezing it tight. The train blasts past them in a brutal hurry.

It's a short train, ending quickly. The barriers rise.

GrandMA (CONT'D)

Hang on.

She peels off into the night.

137-137AEXT./Int. hoSPITAL ENTRANCE/ CORRIDOR - night - momentS - ~~LAST~~

Grandma and Conor race down the corridor, Grandma in the lead. They reach his Mum's hospital room and...

138

InT. hoSPITAL ROOM DOOR - niGht - CONTINUOUS

138

...burst inside, Grandma with a terrible question on her face. The fight is clearly almost over for his Mum. The room is lit only by a small light above her bed. The Female Nurse stands by it, checking an IV.

NuRSE
(to Grandma)
It's okay. You're in time.

Grandma makes a cry of relief, covering her mouth with her hands.

Nurse (CONT'D)
I see you found him.

Grandma goes to the opposite side, sits down and takes her daughter's hand, kissing it and rocking back and forth.

The Nurse leaves, acknowledging Conor. Conor stands in the darkness by the doorway, not knowing what to do.

Mum
(slurring)
Ma?

GrandMA
I'm here, darling. I'm here.
Conor's here, too.

MUM
(eyes still closed)
Is he?

Grandma looks at Conor, urging him to say something.

ConOR
I'm here, mum.

Eyes still shut, Conor's Mum reaches out a hand for him to take. Just like he held it on the cliff face.

There is movement behind Conor, a familiar shadow appearing. Somehow the Monster fits in the room.

MonSTER
Here is the end of the tale.

ConOR
(to Monster)
What do I do?

The Monster puts two hands on Conor's shoulders, gently pushing him towards his mum's bed.

Conor looks at the clock as he goes. It reads 11.58. Moments before 12.07.

ConOR (CONT'D)
 12.07. Is that...?
 (whispering)
 I'm afraid.

MonSTER
 Of course you are afraid. It will
 be hard. It will be more than hard.
 But you will make it through, Conor
 O'Malley.

They reach the bed, where his Mum's hand is still
 outstretched. Conor's eyes begin to water.

ConOR
 (whispering, to Monster)
 You'll stay? You'll stay until...

MonSTER
 I will be right here.

The moment is here. Conor takes his mother's hand.

She opens her eyes, but she sees him there. Really sees him.
 Does she even see the Monster behind him?

Conor can see the light reflected in her eyes, where the
 "life" is.

MonSTER (CONT'D)
 Now all that is left is for you to
 speak the simplest truth of all.

And, at last, Conor can finally tell her the real truth.

ConOR
 (simply, quietly)
 I don't want you to go.

Mum
 (at the end)
 I know, my love. I know.

Conor's tears begin to spill now, in a quiet way.

ConOR
 (again)
 I don't want you to go.

And there's nothing more to say. He leans forward onto her
 bed, and slips an arm around her, holding on to her.

The mother closes her eyes finally. We pull back, Conor holds
 his mother, the Monster supporting him, his Grandma across
 the bed, holding his Mum's hand.

DissoLVE TO:

139

INT. hoSPITAL ROOM - niGHT - momeNTS LATER

139

..a slow approach towards the clock on the hospital room wall. As the second hand slowly sweeps from 12.06.40 to 12.06.45, we hear Conor's earlier question to the Monster.

ConOR (v.O.)

How does the fourth story end?

And this time, we hear the Monster's response.

MonSTER (V.O.)

It ends with the boy holding on tight to his mother. And by doing so, he can finally let her go.

We dissolve gently to black before the second hand's sweep reaches 12.07.

Fade TO BLACK.

Then fade up on:

140 inT. grandma's front HALLWAY - dawn

140

It's the morning after. Dawn light comes in through the windows. A clock reads 7am. Conor and Grandma enter, wearing the same clothes as the night before. They're spent, exhausted.

They climb the stairs, together in their grief.

141 INT. grandma's CORRIDOR/ UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

141

Conor heads to the Guest Bedroom but:

GrandMA

No.

He stops. She nods to the loft conversion that's always been locked.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

It's your room now. I've been making it ready.

She nods him on his way, watching him go to the end of the corridor, climbing the steep stairs.

He looks back once at her to make sure it's okay. She smiles at him, so sadly.

He tries the door. For the first time, it's unlocked. He looks to his Grandma for one last check. She nods again and lets him go.

142

INT. GRANDMA'S loft room - CONTINUOUS

142

It's a bedroom in the top of the house, complete with slanted ceiling and big window, letting in a ton of morning light. Clearly his mother's. But the projector is there, too, and the canisters for King Kong.

There is also the CASE OF PENCILS he'd been eyeing in the shop window, newly purchased by Grandma.

Conor steps inside. Drawings cover the walls, there are shelves of SKETCHPADS in rows, and at the far end, a DESK, just like the one in Conor's room.

On it is Conor's torn drawing of the nightmare from the sitting room.

Conor approaches it and picks it up. Underneath is a SKETCHPAD, an old one. There's a note on top from his Grandma. "This belonged to your mum."

On the cover are the words "Lizzie'S SKETCHPAD, AGE 12 (and a half)."

Conor opens it. We recognise his mum's style of art. He turns the pages past images of trees, birds, friends and then-

Drawing after drawing of the STORIES AND IMAGES WE'VE SEEN: the Prince, the Farmer's Daughter, the Apothecary, the Parson and-

The Monster. Pages and pages of the Monster. Conor stops on one, a good one, the Monster looking ominous, powerful.

On the desk, pencils start to ROLL slightly towards the sketchpad.

ANGLE ON: Conor looking at the page, a small BREEZE stirring his hair, the slightest hint of a private smile curling up.

We pull back, giving him his privacy and we:

FADE TO BLACK.

Credits